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# HOMELAND DEFENSE

## DOD Can Enhance Efforts to Identify Capabilities to Support Civil Authorities during Disasters



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Highlights of [GAO-10-386](#), a report to congressional requesters

## Why GAO Did This Study

In addition to its primary mission of warfighting, the Department of Defense (DOD) plays an important role in civil support. Four years after the poorly coordinated national response to Hurricane Katrina, issues remain about DOD's progress in identifying its capability requirements for supporting a coordinated civilian-military response to a catastrophic domestic event. This report addresses the extent to which DOD (1) has identified and addressed its capability gaps for its civil support mission; (2) has clearly defined roles, responsibilities, and relationships and identified appropriate levels and types of personnel to assign to the FEMA regions; and (3) shares and tracks information concerning its civil support requirements response process with civil authorities. To do this, GAO analyzed DOD civil support guidance and plans and met with DOD and FEMA officials regarding the support that civilian authorities may request during a catastrophic incident.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DOD update its civil support guidance to reflect current doctrine; clearly define roles, responsibilities, and relationships for personnel assigned to manage civilian requests for assistance; conduct a staffing needs assessment for Defense Coordinating Officers; and establish an official system to track requests for assistance across DOD that is accessible to DOD's interagency partners. DOD concurred with our recommendations.

[View GAO-10-386 or key components.](#)  
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## HOMELAND DEFENSE

### DOD Can Enhance Efforts to Identify Capabilities to Support Civil Authorities during Disasters

## What GAO Found

DOD has identified capability gaps for its civil support mission by completing a capabilities-based assessment, but key DOD policies and guidance for the civil support mission are outdated, limiting DOD's ability to fully address capability gaps. DOD's strategic guidance requires that it anticipate requests for civil support by identifying capability gaps. However, inconsistency and misalignment across DOD's policies, strategy, and doctrine for civil support make it difficult for DOD to address capability gaps and pre-position equipment and supplies. GAO found this was due to outdated key DOD policies and guidance that do not reflect DOD's current organizational framework for providing assistance to civil authorities. If DOD updates key policies for civil support, it will be better able to address capability gaps and provide timely and appropriate support to civil authorities.

DOD has increased its personnel dedicated to coordinate civilian requests for assistance, but it has not clearly defined their roles, responsibilities, and relationships, and its staffing is not based upon a staffing assessment by FEMA region. DOD guidance calls for coordination with federal and state authorities on military capabilities for civil support. However, while the Defense Coordinating Officer program has improved civil authorities' overall awareness of DOD's capabilities, roles, and responsibilities, command and control and coordination among the Defense Coordinating Officers and the military services' liaison officers have been confusing and sometimes problematic because DOD's civil support guidance is outdated. Further, DOD officials noted that staffing of the Defense Coordinating Officer program should reflect its multiservice environment and the unique challenges of each FEMA region. Different FEMA regions are prone to different disasters and have varying needs for DOD support, but the size and composition of the Defense Coordinating Officers' staff—nearly all from the Army—were not based on a staffing needs assessment. Therefore, they do not necessarily reflect variations in the support needs of the regions. As a result, DOD may be missing an opportunity to optimize its ability to provide a coordinated response to civil authorities with appropriate multiservice capabilities.

While DOD follows established processes in responding to requests for assistance from civil authorities, it has not established a system to track civilian requests that is accessible to DOD's interagency partners. The *National Response Framework* broadly identifies how DOD responds to requests for assistance, and DOD guidance further specifies DOD's processes. However, civil authorities are not fully aware of the length of this process. While DOD has several different tracking systems in use by different DOD components for the civil support mission, it lacks a formal, interoperable, and unclassified system for tracking all requests for assistance across DOD. Without such a system, gaps will remain in gaining real-time situational awareness and maintaining a common operational picture of DOD support for all federal partners in disaster-response missions including DOD.

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## Abbreviations

CBRNE	chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and high-yield explosive
DCO	Defense Coordinating Officer
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DOD	Department of Defense
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
MA	mission assignment
NORTHCOM	U.S. Northern Command
PACOM	U.S. Pacific Command
RFA	request for assistance
RFF	request for forces
Stafford Act	The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act

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United States Government Accountability Office  
Washington, DC 20548

March 30, 2010

## Congressional Requesters

The United States continues to face an uncertain, complex security environment with the potential for natural disasters and terrorist attacks. After the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, the Department of Defense (DOD) established the U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM)<sup>1</sup> in October 2002 to provide for and manage DOD's homeland defense and civil support missions in the continental United States and Alaska.<sup>2</sup> The poorly coordinated national response to Hurricane Katrina in 2005 further highlighted the need for a more coordinated and integrated civilian and military response to a major domestic incident. Eight years after the September 11 attacks, nearly 4 years after Hurricane Katrina, and while engaging in two major overseas operations, issues remain about DOD's ability to provide defense support to civil authorities.<sup>3</sup> Specifically, two issues are whether DOD has made progress in understanding the requirements for DOD capabilities needed to support civil authorities in the event of catastrophic incidents, as well as recognizing the capabilities of local, tribal, state, territorial, and federal civilian authorities—a key component in identifying any DOD shortfalls or capability gaps.

While DOD is the primary federal agency for homeland defense, it is not the primary federal agency for civil support; rather, it serves as a supporting federal agency to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and other federal civilian agencies in domestic disaster situations in which local, tribal, state, territorial, and other federal resources are

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<sup>1</sup>NORTHCOM was created in April 2002 as part of a revised Unified Command Plan, which outlines the areas of responsibility for the combatant commands. It became officially operational on October 1, 2002.

<sup>2</sup>NORTHCOM differs from other combatant commands in that, in addition to Canada and Mexico, its area of responsibility includes the 49 North American U.S. states and the District of Columbia, as well as Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. U.S. Pacific Command has homeland defense and civil support responsibilities for the state of Hawaii and the U.S.'s Pacific territories of Guam, American Samoa, and the Northern Mariana Islands. These responsibilities are outlined in DOD's Unified Command Plan, most recently in 2008.

<sup>3</sup>For the purposes of this report, we will refer to defense support of civil authorities, known in most of DOD as "DSCA," as "civil support." We are not including DOD support of civilian law enforcement or for chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and high-yield explosives (CBRNE) incidents in the scope of this report.

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overwhelmed. As the combatant commands charged with carrying out DOD's domestic civil support mission, NORTHCOM and U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) face a unique challenge in planning for and coordinating civil support missions, because they must work with and respond to the needs of 56 separate and often unique state and territorial governments. Additionally, NORTHCOM and PACOM have to coordinate with numerous federal agencies that also have roles in planning for and responding to a wide variety of incidents in the homeland, as reflected in the *National Response Framework*.<sup>4</sup> However, DOD operates in support of civil authorities only when directed to do so by the President or the Secretary of Defense. In such instances, NORTHCOM (or PACOM) would command only the federal military<sup>5</sup> portion of such operations in direct support of another federal agency, such as FEMA or the U.S. Secret Service.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>The *National Response Framework*—formerly called the *National Response Plan*—is a national-level guide to how local, state, and federal governments respond to incidents resulting from all kinds of hazards. The framework is based on the principal of tiered response, starting from local communities and working up to include support from the other levels of government and the private sector. Department of Homeland Security, *National Response Framework* (Washington, D.C.: January 2008).

<sup>5</sup>This does not include U.S. Coast Guard forces, which are under the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), or the National Guard, which, unless federalized by the President, would remain under the authority of the respective state and territory governors.

<sup>6</sup>See Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Pub. 3-28, *Civil Support*, vii (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 14, 2007).

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Since the establishment of NORTHCOM in 2002, we have periodically evaluated and reported on issues related to its ability to carry out its missions.<sup>7</sup> Most recently, we evaluated NORTHCOM's exercise program, identifying the program's strengths as well as gaps in areas such as planning, coordination with states and interagency partners, and ways to improve NORTHCOM's participation in the National Exercise Program.<sup>8</sup> We also recently reported on planning, resourcing, and training challenges for DOD's response to domestic chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and high-yield explosive incidents (CBRNE).<sup>9</sup>

While DOD plays an important role in civil support, warfighting remains its primary mission. Therefore, with the exception of key specialized capabilities for its CBRNE consequence-management mission, DOD relies on its "dual-mission forces" to provide all other civil support capabilities in addition to existing overseas missions. Additionally, unlike some combatant commands such as European Command, NORTHCOM has few forces permanently assigned to it; therefore, like all commands that have few forces assigned to them, NORTHCOM must request forces from Joint Forces Command, through the Joint Staff, in order to perform its civil support mission. To plan, prepare for, and carry out their civil support

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<sup>7</sup>GAO, *Homeland Defense: U.S. Northern Command Has Made Progress but Needs to Address Force Allocation, Readiness, Tracking Gaps, and Other Issues*, [GAO-08-251](#) (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 16, 2008); *Homeland Defense: Steps Have Been Taken to Improve U.S. Northern Command's Coordination with the States and the National Guard Bureau, but Gaps Remain*, [GAO-08-252](#) (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 16, 2008); *Influenza Pandemic: DOD Combatant Commands' Preparedness Efforts Could Benefit from More Clearly Defined Roles, Resources, and Risk Mitigation*, [GAO-07-696](#) (Washington, D.C.: June 20, 2007); *Reserve Forces: Actions Needed to Identify National Guard Domestic Equipment Requirements and Readiness*, [GAO-07-60](#) (Washington, D.C.: Jan. 26, 2007); *Chemical and Biological Defense: Management Actions Are Needed to Close the Gap between Army Chemical Unit Preparedness and Stated National Priorities*, [GAO-07-143](#) (Washington, D.C.: Jan. 19, 2007); *Catastrophic Disasters: Enhanced Leadership, Capabilities, and Accountability Controls Will Improve the Effectiveness of the Nation's Preparedness, Response, and Recovery System*, [GAO-06-618](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 6, 2006); *Hurricane Katrina: Better Plans and Exercises Needed to Guide the Military's Response to Catastrophic Natural Disasters*, [GAO-06-643](#) (Washington, D.C.: May 15, 2006); and *Homeland Defense: DOD Needs to Assess the Structure of U.S. Forces for Domestic Military Missions*, [GAO-03-670](#) (Washington, D.C.: July 11, 2003).

<sup>8</sup>GAO, *Homeland Defense: U.S. Northern Command Has a Strong Exercise Program, but Involvement of Interagency Partners and States Can Be Improved*, [GAO-09-849](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 9, 2009).

<sup>9</sup>GAO, *Homeland Defense: Planning, Resourcing, and Training Issues Challenge DOD's Response to Domestic Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and High-Yield Explosive Incidents*, [GAO-10-123](#) (Washington, D.C.: Oct. 7, 2009).



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mission, NORTHCOM and PACOM may rely on other DOD organizations and commands for assistance.

Both NORTHCOM and PACOM have established, primarily under their respective Army component commands, Defense Coordinating Officers with staff known as Defense Coordinating Elements, to serve as DOD representatives to civilian authorities in the 10 FEMA regions.<sup>10</sup> The Defense Coordinating Officers and Elements are colocated with the FEMA regional staff and they attend meetings, planning conferences, exercises, and other activities within their assigned regions and states. In that way they can develop relationships with civilian authorities and gain an understanding, or situational awareness, of civilian capabilities so that DOD will know what, if anything, it may be called upon to provide in the event of a disaster or other incident.

You asked us to examine a broad range of planning and operational considerations related to DOD's and NORTHCOM's homeland defense and civil support missions. This report addresses the extent to which DOD (1) has identified and addressed its capability gaps for its civil support mission; (2) has clearly defined roles, responsibilities, and relationships and identified appropriate levels and types of personnel to assign to the FEMA regions; and (3) shares and tracks information concerning its civil support requirements response process with civil authorities. As agreed with your offices, this report focuses on DOD's support of civil authorities for natural disasters. We did not address issues pertaining to civil support for CBRNE consequence management, as these issues are addressed in other GAO work.<sup>11</sup> We are reporting separately to you on DOD's interagency coordination efforts with U.S. federal agencies for its homeland defense and civil support missions.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>NORTHCOM has designated 10 Defense Coordinating Officers and Defense Coordinating Elements, one in each of the 10 FEMA regions. However, since FEMA Region IX is located in both NORTHCOM and PACOM, PACOM has established two Defense Coordinating Officers of its own, one under the Army for the state of Hawaii and the territory of American Samoa, and one under the Navy for the territories of Guam and the Northern Marianas. Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands are part of FEMA Region II and are covered by the NORTHCOM Defense Coordinating Officer and Element for Region II.

<sup>11</sup>[GAO-10-123](#).

<sup>12</sup>GAO, *Homeland Defense: DOD Needs to Take Actions to Enhance Interagency Coordination for Its Homeland Defense and Civil Support Missions*, [GAO-10-364](#) (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 30, 2010).

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To address our objectives, we reviewed and analyzed DOD, NORTHCOM, and PACOM civil support guidance and plans, as well as DOD's March 2009 *Homeland Defense and Civil Support Capabilities-Based Assessment*. We met with officials in the Joint Staff, NORTHCOM, PACOM, U.S. Transportation Command, and their component and supporting commands to discuss the work and analysis that DOD has conducted in order to understand what support civilian authorities may ask the department to provide during a catastrophic incident. Additionally, we met with FEMA officials at both the national and regional levels to understand how they work with DOD both in identifying capability gaps during planning stages and in channeling state and federal requests-for-assistance to DOD during an actual incident. During our visits to 4 of the 10 FEMA regions, we met with the Defense Coordinating Officers and Defense Coordinating Elements in those regions to discuss their roles as DOD's representatives to FEMA, other civilian authorities, and the National Guard in their assigned states and regions. We conducted telephone interviews with all 10 NORTHCOM Defense Coordinating Officers and a survey with the 2 PACOM Defense Coordinating Officers, which allowed us to gain a broad picture of DOD's civil support activities across the country. We used the results of these interviews and surveys, our meetings with DOD and FEMA officials, and our review of documents and guidance to identify areas for improvement in DOD's ability to provide support to and respond to requests-for-assistance from civil authorities. Additional information on our scope and methodology appears in appendix I.

We conducted this performance audit from January 2009 to March 2010 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

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## Results in Brief

DOD has identified some capability gaps for its civil support mission by completing a capabilities-based assessment, but key DOD policies and guidance for the civil support mission are outdated, inconsistent, and unclear, which limits DOD's ability to fully identify and address its capability gaps. A strategic goal for NORTHCOM is to anticipate requests for civil support and identify capability gaps. NORTHCOM, at the direction of the Deputy Secretary of Defense, conducted a capabilities-based assessment for DOD's homeland defense and civil support missions that

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led to the identification of 31 DOD capability gaps for those missions; 10 of these were for civil support missions related to natural disasters. However, the capabilities-based assessment also noted inconsistencies and a lack of alignment across policies, strategy, and doctrinal actions for DOD's civil support mission, making it difficult to determine DOD's capability requirements. We found this lack of alignment attributable to the fact that key DOD policies and guidance for civil support—specifically, DOD Directives 3025.1, “Military Support to Civil Authorities” (1993); 3025.15, “Military Assistance to Civil Authorities” (1997); and Manual 3025.1-M, “Manual for Civil Emergencies” (1994)—are outdated and do not reflect the current organizational framework that DOD has created for providing assistance to civil authorities. For example, the 2008 Unified Command Plan assigns NORTHCOM and PACOM the responsibility for support to civil authorities within their areas of responsibility, while DOD directives for civil support, which pre-date the establishment of NORTHCOM, designate executive agent responsibility for support to civil authorities to the Department of the Army. According to the DOD homeland defense and civil support capabilities-based assessment, DOD strategy and doctrine recognize the department's civil support mission, but DOD policy prohibits its components from procuring or maintaining any supplies, materiel, or equipment exclusively for the civil support mission, unless otherwise authorized by the Secretary of Defense. According to U.S. Transportation Command officials, this policy may limit DOD's ability to pre-position forces and equipment for lifesaving missions, such as aeromedical evacuations prior to a hurricane making landfall along the coastal United States. Incomplete DOD policy guidance for its civil support mission may lead to confusion and misunderstanding among the military services and other DOD components regarding the proper employment of defense capabilities in support of civil authorities. We are recommending that DOD update its guidance for civil support missions to reflect current doctrine, terminology, funding policy, practices, and DOD's organizational framework for providing support to civil authorities. DOD agreed with our recommendation and discussed the steps it was taking to update its guidance for civil support missions and identified time frames for completion of the guidance.

While DOD has identified and assigned personnel to coordinate civilian requests-for-assistance, an important DOD capability for civil support, DOD has not clearly defined roles, responsibilities, and command and control relationships for these personnel, nor has it conducted a formal staffing needs assessment that accounts for differences across the FEMA regions to which these personnel are assigned. DOD guidance states that the Defense Coordinating Officer serves as DOD's single point of contact

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for coordinating with federal and state authorities on the use of military capabilities for civil support. Other DOD guidance, specifically DOD Directive 3025.16, "Military Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officer (EPLO) Program" (2000), creates additional military service points of contact, such as Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers, for federal and state coordination with the military services. DOD officials have indicated that the staffing of the Defense Coordinating Officer program should reflect the multiservice environment in which the program operates. Further, FEMA officials told us that DOD's Defense Coordinating Officer program has improved overall awareness of DOD capabilities for civil support. However, the ability of the Defense Coordinating Officers and Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers to coordinate and provide DOD capabilities to civil authorities may be limited, because DOD has not delineated the roles, responsibilities, and command and control relationships between the Defense Coordinating Officers and the Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers. In part, this is due to the fact that DOD places the multiservice Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers under the operational command and control of their respective services, while the Defense Coordinating Officers are under the operational command and control of the combatant commands, NORTHCOM and PACOM. Further, the guidance does not specify how these command structures are to plan and function together. For example, these different command structures can lead to inconsistencies between the Defense Coordinating Officers and Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers in their training and equipping requirements, which could hinder their ability to provide optimal support to civil authorities during a real-life disaster or event. Further, DOD officials told us that there is friction and confusion between the military services and the Defense Coordinating Officers regarding the proper employment of Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers for civil support missions. Moreover, while different FEMA regions are prone to different disasters and have varying needs for DOD support, the composition of the Defense Coordinating Officers' staff is not based upon a staffing needs assessment; they do not reflect variations in the geographic size and catastrophic disaster profile of the different FEMA regions. Based upon our interviews, some Defense Coordinating Officers may not have the appropriate mix of staff to meet the varying needs of the FEMA regions, potentially limiting DOD's ability to provide an optimally coordinated response to civil authorities with appropriate multiservice capabilities. Therefore, we are recommending that, as DOD updates its key policies and guidance for civil support—such as DOD Directive 3025.1, "Military Support to Civil Authorities" (1993)—it should define roles and responsibilities for the personnel involved in coordinating civilian requests-for-assistance and ensure that the program's

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staffing reflects service representation and regional differences as appropriate. DOD concurred with the recommendation and discussed the steps it is planning to take in response.

Although DOD uses an established process to respond to requests-for-assistance from civil authorities, it has not established a system that both comprehensively tracks civilian requests-for-assistance and is accessible to DOD's interagency partners. The *National Response Framework* broadly calls for DOD and other federal agencies to respond to requests-for-assistance from state and local civilian authorities, while DOD's doctrine and guidance specify how the department will review and respond to these requests. However, as DOD and FEMA officials told us, civil authorities have misconceptions about time frames for DOD's process for approving and resourcing civilian requests-for-assistance. For example, DOD's capabilities-based assessment for homeland defense and civil support identified the response timeliness of DOD transportation support—including aeromedical evacuation—as a capability shortfall. The assessment noted that although civil authorities have identified a need for DOD transportation support within 24 hours of a catastrophic incident, DOD has limited capability to respond sooner than 72 hours. DOD could help to mitigate this issue by incorporating its internal processes for responding to requests-for-assistance in the partner guide that we recommended in a recent report.<sup>13</sup> Further, DOD's information sharing implementation plan recommends the development of an unclassified information sharing system providing a common operating picture for all the appropriate authorities in civil support operations. However, DOD currently lacks a single, comprehensive system that would accomplish this goal. For instance, NORTHCOM and PACOM use a Web-based system to track incoming requests-for-assistance, but only those coming from FEMA and the National Interagency Fire Center appear in the system, even though other federal agencies such as the U.S. Secret Service also request assistance from DOD for disasters or National Special Security Events. Further, not all DOD entities involved in civil support missions—such as Joint Forces Command—use the Web-based system because this system is

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<sup>13</sup> In [GAO-10-364](#), we state that “to facilitate and institutionalize a unified approach between DOD and its federal partners for interagency coordination for homeland defense and civil support missions, we recommend that the Secretary of Defense direct the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, in coordination with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to establish a time line to develop and issue a partner guide that identifies the roles and responsibilities of DOD entities, processes, and agreed-upon approaches for interagency coordination for homeland defense and civil support efforts.”

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voluntary and not an official DOD program. Joint Forces Command uses a classified system that does not interact with the system used by NORTHCOM and PACOM. Additionally, FEMA and the other lead federal agencies, such as the U.S. Secret Service, do not have a common operating picture with DOD because DOD does not share this tracking system with them. Without the development of a comprehensive, unclassified system for tracking requests-for-assistance, gaps will remain in enabling real-time situational awareness and a common operational picture for all participants involved in disaster-response missions. We are recommending that DOD establish a formal DOD tracking system for requests-for-assistance from civil authorities that is accessible to all of DOD's interagency partners. DOD concurred with the recommendation and added that it needs access to FEMA's system for tracking mission assignments to provide the best potential for insuring accurate situational awareness of requests for DOD assistance.

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## Background

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### Framework for Disaster Response

To assist in integrating state and federal responses to domestic emergencies, the Homeland Security Council developed 15 national planning scenarios in 2004 whose purpose was to form the basis for identifying the capabilities needed to respond to a wide range of emergencies. The scenarios focus on the consequences that federal, state, and local first responders may have to address, and they are intended to illustrate the scope and magnitude of large-scale, catastrophic emergencies for which the nation needs to be prepared. These include a wide range of terrorist attacks involving nuclear, biological, and chemical agents, as well as catastrophic natural disasters, such as an earthquake or hurricane. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS), which was established in 2002<sup>14</sup> to, among other purposes, reduce America's vulnerability to terrorism, is the lead federal agency responsible for preventing, preparing for, and responding to a wide range of major domestic disasters and other emergencies. Then-President George W. Bush designated DHS and its Secretary as the lead federal representative responsible for domestic incident management and coordination of all-hazards preparedness. In 2008, DHS issued its *National Response Framework*, which provides a framework for federal, state, and local agencies to use in planning for emergencies and establishes standardized

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<sup>14</sup>The Homeland Security Act of 2002, Pub. L. No. 107-296, §101 (2002).

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doctrine, terminology, processes, and an integrated system for federal response activities. Overall coordination of federal incident-management activities, other than those conducted for homeland defense, is generally the responsibility of DHS. Within DHS and as the executive agent for the National Preparedness System,<sup>15</sup> FEMA is responsible for coordinating and integrating the preparedness of federal, state, local, tribal, and nongovernmental entities.

Response to disasters or other catastrophic events in the United States is guided by the *National Response Framework* and is based on a tiered response to an incident; that is, incidents must be managed at the lowest jurisdictional levels and supported by additional response capabilities as needed (see fig. 1). Local and county governments respond to emergencies daily using their own resources and rely on mutual aid agreements and other types of assistance agreements with neighboring governments when they need additional resources. For example, county and local authorities are likely to have the resources needed to adequately respond to a small-scale incident, such as a local flood, and therefore will not request additional resources. For larger-scale incidents, when resources are overwhelmed, local and county governments will request assistance from the state. States have capabilities, such as the National Guard,<sup>16</sup> that can help communities respond and recover. If additional resources are required, the state may request assistance from other states through interstate mutual aid agreements, such as the Emergency Management

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<sup>15</sup>The National Preparedness System is intended to provide a tool to assist jurisdictions, agencies, and organizations at all levels to plan for, assess, and track capabilities in a shared environment.

<sup>16</sup>The National Guard holds a unique dual status in that it performs federal missions under the command of the President and state missions under the command of the state's Governor. Currently, DOD funding for the National Guard's federal warfighting mission provides for the vast majority of the National Guard's personnel, training, and equipment. The National Guard can use the capabilities provided by DOD—such as transportation, engineering, medical, and communications units and equipment—when available to respond to domestic emergencies while operating under the command of the Governors and generally paid for with state funding. However, under certain circumstances such as large-scale, multistate events, homeland security–related activities, or federally declared disasters, federal funding has been provided for missions carried out by the states' National Guard.

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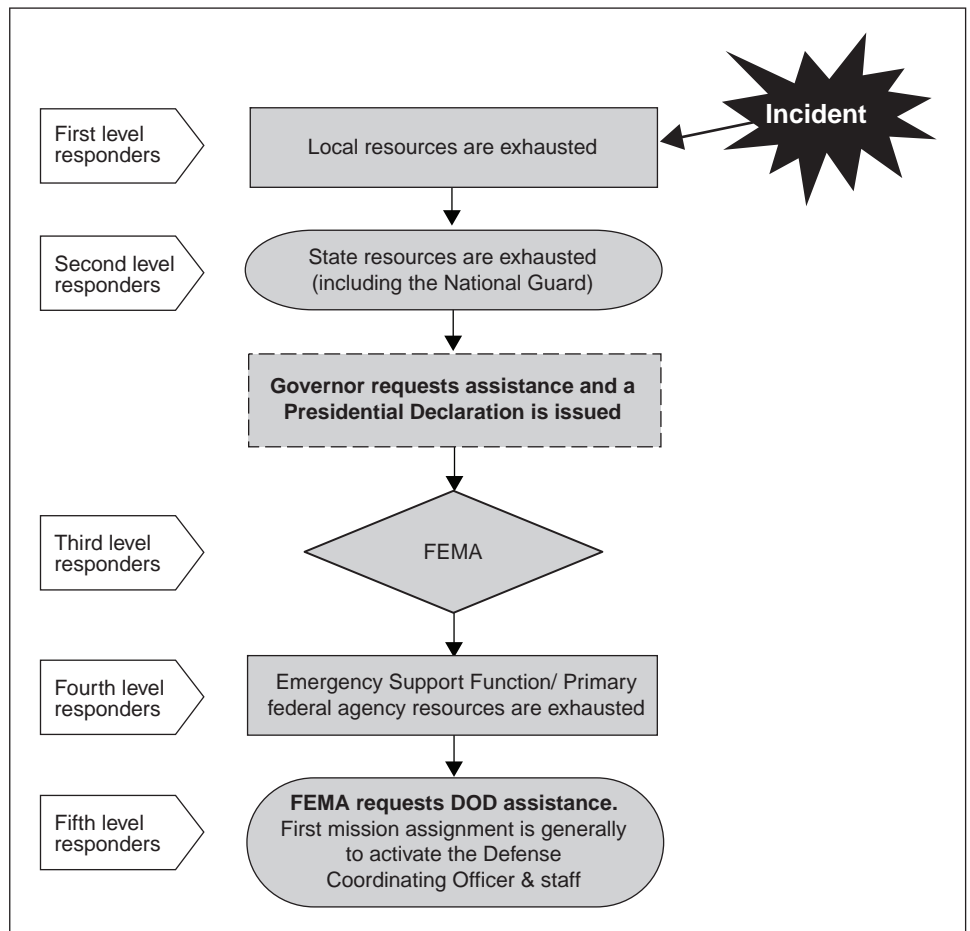
Assistance Compact.<sup>17</sup> If an incident surpasses community and state capabilities, the governor can seek federal assistance. The federal government has a wide array of capabilities and resources that can be made available to assist state and local agencies to respond to incidents.

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<sup>17</sup>The Emergency Management Assistance Compact is a mutual aid agreement among member states and is administered by the National Emergency Management Association. States affected by disasters have increasingly relied on the Emergency Management Assistance Compact as a means to access resources from other states, including emergency managers, National Guard assets, and first responders. GAO, *Emergency Management Assistance Compact: Enhancing EMAC's Collaborative and Administrative Capacity Should Improve National Disaster Response*, [GAO-07-854](#) (Washington, D.C.: June 29, 2007).



**Figure 1: National Response Framework**



Source: DOD.

In accordance with the National Response Framework and applicable laws including the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Stafford Act)<sup>18</sup> various federal departments or agencies may play primary, coordinating, or supporting roles, based on their authorities and resources and the nature of the threat or incident. In some instances, national defense assets may be needed to assist FEMA or another agency

<sup>18</sup>The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, Pub. L. No. 100-707 (1988), amended the Disaster Relief Act of 1974, Pub. L. No. 93-288 (1974). The Stafford Act constitutes the statutory authority for most federal disaster response activities, especially as they pertain to FEMA and FEMA programs.

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in the national response to an incident. Defense resources are committed following approval by the Secretary of Defense or at the direction of the President.

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## Military Mission and Organization

One of DOD's missions is civil support, which includes domestic disaster relief operations for incidents such as fires, hurricanes, floods, earthquakes, National Special Security Events (for example, the opening of the United Nations General Assembly, or the Democratic and Republican National Conventions), counterdrug operations, and consequence management for CBRNE events.<sup>19</sup> As noted earlier, DOD is not the primary federal agency for such missions (unless so designated by the President) and thus it provides defense support of civil authorities only when (1) state, local, and other federal resources are overwhelmed or unique military capabilities are required; (2) assistance is requested by the primary federal agency; and (3) either NORTHCOM or PACOM, the two combatant commands with responsibility for civil support missions, is directed to do so by the President or the Secretary of Defense.<sup>20</sup> When deciding to commit defense resources, among other factors, defense officials consider military readiness, appropriateness of the circumstances, and whether the response is in accordance with the law.<sup>21</sup> For example, the Posse Comitatus Act<sup>22</sup> allows military forces to provide civil support, but these forces generally cannot become directly involved in law enforcement. When they are called upon to support civil authorities, NORTHCOM and PACOM generally operate through established joint task forces that are subordinate to the command. In most cases, support will be localized, limited, and specific. When the scope of the disaster is reduced to the point where the primary federal agency can again assume full control and management without military assistance, NORTHCOM and PACOM will exit.

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<sup>19</sup> As we noted earlier, for the purposes of this report, we have scoped out other civil support activities such as counterdrug operations and management of the consequences of a terrorist incident employing a weapon of mass destruction.

<sup>20</sup> Department of Homeland Security, *National Response Framework* (Washington, D.C.: January 2008), and Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Pub. 3-28, *Civil Support*.

<sup>21</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Pub. 3-28, *Civil Support*, II-4.

<sup>22</sup> 18 U.S.C. § 1385 (2007).

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DOD established the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Americas' Security Affairs to oversee homeland defense and civil support activities for DOD, under the authority of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, and, as appropriate, in coordination with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. This office develops policies, conducts analysis, provides advice, and makes recommendations on homeland defense, defense support of civil authorities, emergency preparedness, and domestic crisis-management matters within the department. The Assistant Secretary assists the Secretary of Defense in providing policy directions to NORTHCOM and other applicable combatant commands to guide the development and execution of homeland defense plans and activities. This direction is provided through the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. This office is also responsible for coordinating with DHS. While most of the National Guard's roles and responsibilities in the disaster-response area are not federal ones, the Chief of the National Guard Bureau is a principal advisor to the Secretary of Defense on matters involving nonfederalized National Guard forces.<sup>23</sup> In this role, the National Guard Bureau provides NORTHCOM, PACOM, and other DOD organizations with information on National Guard capabilities available in the states for disaster response so that DOD can better anticipate what, if any, additional capabilities it may be asked to provide.

The process whereby DOD provides capabilities to assist civil authorities has changed over the past 5 years. In 2004, a series of four hurricanes struck Florida, and DOD received a large number of civil requests-for-assistance that all had to be approved by the Secretary of Defense. DOD and others concluded that the process was time-consuming and complicated. To streamline the process, the Joint Staff developed operational guidance for DOD commands—referred to as an Execute Order<sup>24</sup>—modeled after the Execute Order for Operation Noble Eagle, the North American Aerospace Defense Command's activities to defend American skies begun in response to the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. A standing Defense Support of Civil Authorities Execute Order has been several times, but an important purpose has been to pre-identify forces that NORTHCOM and PACOM can request from the Secretary of Defense in the event of a disaster. The Execute Order places DOD capabilities into four categories. Category 1 comprises capabilities

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<sup>23</sup> A recent change due to the 2008 National Defense Authorization Act, Pub. L. No. 110-181, §§1811, 1812, and 1813 (2008).

<sup>24</sup> An Execute Order is a directive to implement an approved military course of action.

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assigned to the combatant command (that is, the Defense Coordinating Officer and staff, service component command staff, command and control personnel, and communication capabilities). Category 2 comprises pre-identified capabilities, such as helicopters for rapid area assessments, C-130 aircraft that can refuel helicopters, and capabilities for search and rescue, that NORTHCOM and PACOM can place on 24-hour prepare-to-deploy status after notifying the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of Defense. Category 3 comprises capabilities for DOD use (for example, combat camera, or public affairs). Category 4 comprises large-scale response forces (rarely used except for large-scale disasters such as Hurricane Katrina).

Finally, local installation and unit commanders have the authority to respond to localized events as requested by local civilian authorities. These responses, conducted under immediate response authority, do not normally exceed 72 hours and require notification of the relevant service commands as well as the Secretary of Defense. Additionally, local installations may establish mutual aid agreements for things such as fire and ambulance support with the communities surrounding their installations. NORTHCOM and PACOM are not involved in either of these responses. However, depending on the nature of the local incident, including possibility of media involvement, NORTHCOM and PACOM may receive a spot report<sup>25</sup> regarding the local incident as part of the process of informing DOD senior leadership.

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## Combatant Commands

NORTHCOM is the unified military command responsible for planning, organizing, and executing DOD's homeland defense and federal military support to civil authorities' missions within the continental United States, Alaska, and U.S. territorial waters. PACOM has these responsibilities for the Hawaiian Islands and U.S. territories in the Pacific. Both combatant commands receive support from a variety of commands and organizations in their direct chain of command and throughout DOD. Table 1 shows examples of these commands.

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<sup>25</sup> A spot report is a concise narrative report of essential information covering events or conditions that may have an immediate and significant effect on current planning and operations.

**Table 1: Examples of Commands Supporting NORTHCOM and PACOM for Homeland Defense and Civil Support**

Subordinate commands		Component commands		Supporting commands
NORTHCOM	PACOM	NORTHCOM	PACOM	
Joint Task Force, Alaska	Joint Task Force, Homeland Defense	U.S. Army North	U.S. Army Pacific	U.S. Fleet Forces Command
Joint Force Headquarters National Capital Region		Air Forces North	U.S. Pacific Fleet	U.S. Joint Forces Command
		U.S. Marine Forces North	U.S. Marine Forces Pacific	U.S. Transportation Command
			U.S. Pacific Air Forces	

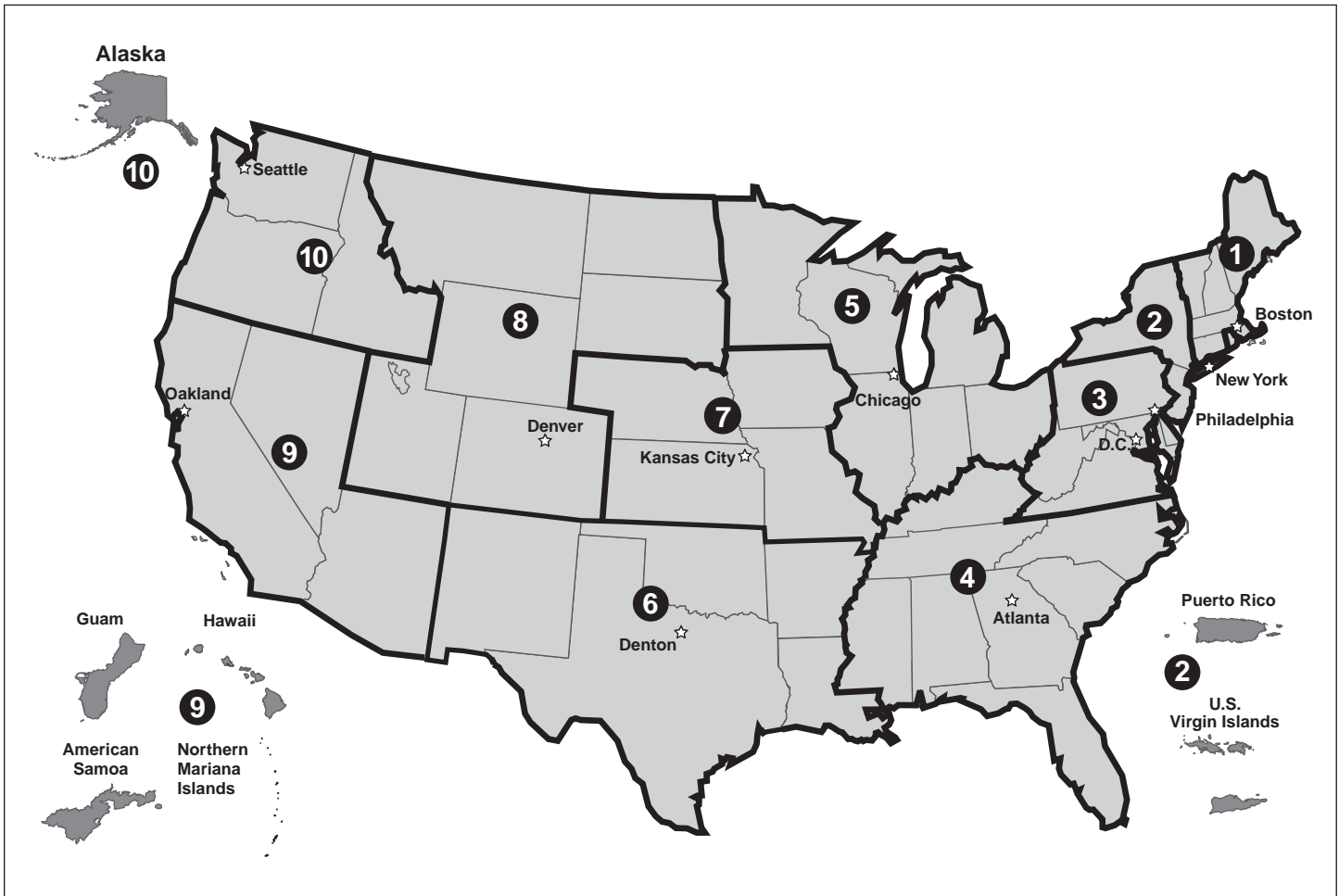
Source: DOD.

## DOD Civil Support Personnel

As part of the lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina, NORTHCOM has placed a Defense Coordinating Officer with associated support staff, known as the Defense Coordinating Element, in each of FEMA's 10 regional offices, placing greater emphasis on the Defense Coordinating Officers' mission. Figure 2 shows the 10 FEMA regions. Prior to October 1, 2006, the Defense Coordinating Officers had full-time jobs commanding training units for the First and Fifth Continental U.S. Armies. The Defense Coordinating Officers, along with their 40-person training staff, served part-time as Defense Coordinating Officers and only did so when requested by FEMA or another federal agency. Upon establishment of Fifth U.S. Army as the Army component to NORTHCOM, 10 full-time regional Defense Coordinating Officers were established and located in the FEMA regional offices. Defense Coordinating Officers are senior-level military officers (typically Army colonels) with joint experience and training on the *National Response Framework*, defense support of civil authorities, and DHS's National Incident Management System. They are responsible for assisting the primary federal agency when requested by FEMA; they provide liaison support and requirements validation; and they serve as single points of contact for state, local, and other federal authorities that need DOD support. Defense Coordinating Officers work closely with federal, state, and local officials to determine what unique DOD capabilities can be used to assist in mitigating the effects of a natural or man-made disaster. Since FEMA region IX is split between NORTHCOM and PACOM, NORTHCOM has a Defense Coordinating Officer assigned to the FEMA regional office in California and PACOM has established two Defense Coordinating Officers within its area of operations. Currently, there is a Navy civilian Defense Coordinating Officer for Guam and the

Northern Mariana Islands and a part-time, Army Reserve Defense Coordinating Officer for Hawaii and American Samoa.<sup>26</sup>

Figure 2: FEMA Regions



Sources: FEMA; Map Resources (maps).

Additionally, the military services have Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers. These are senior Reserve officers (typically colonels or Navy captains) from the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps who

<sup>26</sup> At the time of our review, PACOM was in the process of converting the part-time Army Reserve Defense Coordinating Officer for Hawaii and American Samoa to a full-time, active duty position like the NORTHCOM Defense Coordinating Officers.

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represent the federal military in each of the 10 FEMA regional offices and in the states and territories.<sup>27</sup> While they have some service-specific responsibilities, Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers' civil support responsibilities include assisting the Defense Coordinating Officers with service subject-matter expertise and coordinating the provision of military personnel, equipment, and supplies to support the emergency relief and cleanup efforts of civil authorities.

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## DOD Has Taken Actions to Identify Capability Gaps, but Key Policies and Guidance Are Outdated

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### NORTHCOM Led a Capabilities-Based Assessment That Identified DOD Capability Gaps for the Homeland Defense and Civil Support Missions

DOD planning documents for its civil support mission require that DOD maintain continuous situational awareness of its civil support operating environment by identifying shortfalls in capabilities, planning, exercising, and coordinating DOD efforts with its interagency partners. Further, in its *Vision 2020* statement, NORTHCOM identifies a strategic goal of providing timely and effective civil support by anticipating requests for support and providing military capabilities at the right place and the right time.<sup>28</sup> Accordingly, at the direction of the Deputy Secretary of Defense and in response to a request from the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Americas' Security Affairs, NORTHCOM agreed to lead a department-wide, capabilities-based assessment for DOD's homeland defense and civil support missions. The strategic goals of the effort were to enable improvement in DOD homeland defense and civil support policy, evaluate existing DOD capabilities and identify DOD capability gaps, improve DOD's integration with interagency mission

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<sup>27</sup>At the time of our review, the Marine Corps only provided Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers to the 10 FEMA regions and did not have any in individual states. The other three military services informed us that they generally have at least one Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officer in each of the states and territories.

<sup>28</sup>North American Aerospace Defense Command and United States Northern Command, *Vision 2020*, (Oct. 1, 2007).

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partners, and recommend further action to promote future capability development for the homeland defense and civil support missions. The Deputy Secretary of Defense identified the capabilities-based assessment as one of DOD's top 25 transformational priorities to be completed or advanced to a major milestone by December 2008. DOD conducted the assessment between September 2007 and October 2008 in accordance with DOD processes.<sup>29</sup> DOD agencies, the combatant commands, the military services, the National Guard Bureau, DHS, and other key federal interagency partners participated in the assessment. The assessment did not include participants from state and local governments.

The recently completed capabilities-based assessment identified 31 capability gaps for DOD's homeland defense and civil support missions. The 31 capability gaps were derived from an initial identification of 2,192 capabilities, tasks, and statements of required activity that define and describe the homeland defense and civil support missions. According to our analysis, the assessment identified 14 capability gaps related to the civil support mission, 4 of which are CBRNE or law enforcement related, and 17 gaps related to the homeland defense mission or mission assurance function.<sup>30</sup> The 10 civil support gaps related to natural disasters<sup>31</sup> were:

- Common Operational Picture,
- Operational Intelligence Analysis and Dissemination,
- Information Management and Sharing,
- DOD Interagency Planning,
- DOD Interagency Operations,

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<sup>29</sup>The assessment was in accordance with DOD's Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System, which sets forth an integrated, collaborative process to identify and guide the development of new capability requirements that address the current and emerging security environment.

<sup>30</sup>According to the *Homeland Defense and Civil Support Capabilities-Based Assessment*, mission assurance is defined as a process to ensure that assigned tasks or duties can be performed in accordance with the intended purpose or plan. It is a summation of the activities and measures taken to ensure that required capabilities and all supporting infrastructures are available to DOD to carry out the National Military Strategy.

<sup>31</sup>Under the civil support heading, NORTHCOM included CBRNE Decontamination Support, CBRNE Urban Search and Rescue, and Biological Incident Support. We have not included them because they are outside the focus of this review. Additionally, DOD included Riverine Presence and U.S. Coast Guard Maritime Security Levels as a capability gap relevant to the civil support mission. However, this capability primarily involves DOD maritime support to civil authorities for activities such as combating terrorism, counterdrug operations, and law enforcement activities.



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- DOD Transportation Support,
  - Mass Care Support,
  - Assured Access to Electromagnetic Spectrum,
  - Logistical Health Medical Support, and
  - Isolation and Quarantine Support.

The capabilities-based assessment was limited in that (1) the nature of its assumptions may have hidden other capability gaps and (2) DOD has not received precise information from civil authorities on the capabilities it will be asked to provide. First, one of the strategic assumptions guiding the capabilities-based assessment is that DOD will provide a total force (combined active and reserve component) response to support civil authorities for domestic emergencies and other activities as directed. However, as we have reported in prior work and raised as a matter for congressional consideration,<sup>32</sup> DOD has no legal authority to order Reserve personnel to involuntary active duty service for the purpose of providing civil support in the response to a natural disaster,<sup>33</sup> which may limit DOD's ability to provide the capabilities requested by civil authorities in a timely manner. For example, according to U.S. Transportation Command officials, this lack of authority has made it difficult to access the personnel it needs to perform its civil support operations, especially since about 88 percent of DOD's capabilities for aeromedical evacuation operations are assigned to the reserve component. U.S. Transportation Command officials said they have been able to rely on volunteers from the service Reserves to meet their civil support requirements thus far, but they noted that, in the event of multiple disaster requirements that overwhelm state capabilities, U.S. Transportation Command might not be able to provide the capabilities requested due to the lack of authority to order service Reservists to active duty service to respond to disasters. DOD officials we interviewed told us that the department has advocated a change to this legislative status, but that the states have opposed the change due to issues involving state sovereignty.

Second, while the assessment provided a general discussion of the civil support capability shortfalls it identified, it concluded that a precise scope of many of these shortfalls could not be determined because several strategic policy questions remained unanswered. There is a lack of

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<sup>32</sup>GAO, *Disaster Management: Improving the Nation's Response to Catastrophic Disasters*, [GAO/RCED-93-186](#) (Washington, D.C.: July 23, 1993) and [GAO-06-643](#).

<sup>33</sup>10 U.S.C. § 12304 (c) (1) (2010).

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interagency understanding and agreement on the extent of capabilities requested by civil authorities that DOD is expected to provide, and on how quickly DOD is expected to provide them. For example, Emergency Support Function #8: Public Health and Medical Services Annex to the *National Response Framework*, requests that DOD provide support for evacuating seriously ill or injured patients, but it does not provide specifics on the amount of capabilities that DOD should provide, or the timeliness of DOD's response for providing these capabilities. We previously reported that NORTHCOM has difficulty identifying requirements for capabilities it may need in part because NORTHCOM does not have more detailed information from DHS and the states on the specific requirements needed from the military in the event of a disaster.<sup>34</sup> For DOD's civil support mission, the requirements are established by the needs of the federal, state, and local agencies and organizations that DOD would be supporting in an actual event. In January 2008, the Commission on the National Guard and Reserves noted that DHS had not defined the requirements that DOD must meet to adequately perform its civil support mission.<sup>35</sup> Several DOD officials we spoke with said that one of the biggest challenges in providing defense support of civil authorities is that civil authorities have not yet defined the capability requirements that DOD might be requested to provide in the event of a disaster. FEMA is responsible for establishing a comprehensive system to assess the nation's prevention capabilities and overall preparedness. However, our prior work has shown that FEMA faces methodological and coordination challenges in completing the system and issuing required reports on national preparedness.<sup>36</sup>

DOD and DHS have undertaken some recent initiatives to address gaps in strategic planning that should assist DOD in identifying its capability requirements for the civil support mission. For example, during the course of our work, DOD and DHS were implementing the Integrated Planning System,<sup>37</sup> which includes a process for fostering integration of federal,

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<sup>34</sup>[GAO-08-251](#).

<sup>35</sup>The Commission on National Guard and the Reserves, *Transforming the National Guard and Reserves into a 21st-Century Operational Force*, Final Report (Arlington, VA: Jan. 31, 2008).

<sup>36</sup>GAO, *National Preparedness: FEMA Has Made Progress, but Needs to Complete and Integrate Planning, Exercise, and Assessment Efforts*, [GAO-09-369](#) (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 30, 2009).

<sup>37</sup>In January 2010, DOD officials stated that the Integrated Planning System is currently under reconsideration by the National Security Council.

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state, local, and tribal plans that allows for state, local, and tribal capability assessments to feed into federal plans. In conjunction with officials from federal, state, and local government as well as the private sector, DOD and DHS recently issued catastrophic plans for responding to and recovering from a category 4 hurricane in Hawaii. These plans were developed in accordance with the Integrated Planning System. DOD and FEMA officials in Hawaii with whom we spoke said that this was an important milestone because it represented the first time that DOD's capability requirements had been identified and formally agreed to by interagency stakeholders. As another example, DHS has also established a Task Force for Emergency Readiness pilot initiative that seeks to integrate federal and state planning efforts for catastrophic events. Five states are currently participating in the initiative, and officials from the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Americas' Security Affairs told us that the initiative should assist the states in identifying their capability requirements for catastrophic events, which in turn should assist DOD in determining the capabilities it may be asked to provide. As a third example, the National Guard Bureau recently completed an assessment of National Guard capabilities for domestic missions by conducting a series of regional war games. A major goal of the effort was to identify National Guard capability gaps and provide recommendations on how to address these gaps.

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## Key Policies and Guidance for DOD's Civil Support Mission Are Outdated, Inconsistent, and Unclear

### DOD Policies Are Outdated

DOD's capabilities-based assessment highlighted a lack of alignment across DOD's policies, strategy, and doctrine for its civil support mission, making it difficult to determine DOD's capability requirements. We determined that this is due, in part, to outdated key policy directives. In many cases, DOD's policy guidance does not reflect widely accepted terminology or the organizational structure that DOD has developed for providing assistance to civil authorities. For example, DOD Directive 3025.1, "Military Support to Civil Authorities," which defines disaster response and outlines the responsibilities of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Unified Commands, and other DOD components and military services that respond to a civil emergency, was issued in January 1993—almost 10 years prior to the establishment of NORTHCOM. DOD's implementing guidance for this directive, 3025.1-M, "Manual for Civil Emergencies," was issued in

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1994 and DOD Directive 3025.15, "Military Assistance to Civil Authorities," which establishes DOD policy for evaluating requests for disaster assistance, was issued in February 1997. This guidance further states that the Department of the Army is the DOD executive agent for military support to civil authorities, and is responsible for developing planning guidance, plans, and procedures on behalf of the Secretary of Defense. Since NORTHCOM's creation, the 2008 Unified Command Plan and the Forces for Unified Command Memorandum state that both NORTHCOM and PACOM, through the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, are responsible for providing support to civil authorities within their areas of responsibility.

Moreover, a 2009 DOD directive, DOD Directive 5111.13, established the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Americas' Security Affairs as the principal advisor to the Secretary of Defense for DOD's civil support mission. The DOD policy directives are not aligned with DOD and national-level guidance in that they use outdated terminology. For example, the 1993 and 1997 DOD directives use the terms "military support" and "military assistance" to describe the types of support DOD provides to civil authorities, but DOD currently uses the term "defense support of civil authorities." The latter term has been widely accepted by the defense community and is part of current strategy, doctrine, and plans, including the *Strategy for Homeland Defense and Civil Support*, as well as interagency documents, such as the *National Response Framework*. DOD is considering a new draft directive for defense support of civil authorities that will supersede the old policy directives and provide overarching policy guidance for its civil support mission. However, the draft directive has been under review for about 4 years and has yet to be finalized. According to officials from the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Americas' Security Affairs, the draft directive has taken longer to finalize than expected because of the evolving nature of DOD's civil support mission. These officials noted that defense support of civil authorities has been difficult to define because DOD's civil support mission has shifted from a military service-centric to a more unified, joint effort, as exemplified by the establishment of NORTHCOM.

#### DOD Policies Are Inconsistent and Unclear

The military services' implementing guidance for DOD's civil support mission, DOD 3025.1-M, is based on the DOD directives that were issued in 1993 and 1997, but DOD joint doctrine and planning documents reference the draft DOD directive. While DOD recognizes that there are circumstances in which new doctrine would influence policy, the normal progression is for policy to drive doctrine and thereby influence training

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and the conduct of operations. Thus, we note that incomplete DOD policy guidance for its civil support mission may lead to confusion and misunderstanding among the military services and other DOD components regarding the proper employment of defense capabilities in support of civil authorities.

One of the chief examples of the confusion caused by DOD's outdated policies and their lack of alignment with other published documents is the disparate perceptions of the components as to the importance of the civil support mission. According to the DOD homeland defense and civil support capabilities-based assessment, DOD strategy and joint doctrine recognize the department's civil support mission, but DOD policy prohibits the DOD components from procuring or maintaining any supplies, materiel, or equipment exclusively for their civil support mission, unless otherwise directed by the Secretary of Defense.<sup>38</sup> The capabilities-based assessment noted that some DOD components have interpreted this policy statement to signify that DOD does not program or budget for civil support capabilities. We found this view was prevalent among DOD officials we interviewed, even though DOD policy does not preclude DOD agencies from programming and budgeting for civil support capabilities—rather, it requires that they obtain direction from the Secretary of Defense to do so.<sup>39</sup> Further, strategy and joint guidance also do not provide clarity about funding and priority of the civil support mission. The DOD *Strategy for Homeland Defense and Civil Support* states that DOD will maintain capabilities to assist civil authorities in responding to catastrophic incidents. However, while the strategy implies that DOD will program and budget for capabilities for responding to catastrophic incidents, it does not directly state this for the civil support mission. Additionally, Joint Publication 3-28, *Civil Support*, recognizes civil support as a DOD mission but states that civil support capabilities are derived from DOD warfighting capabilities that could be applied to domestic assistance and law enforcement support.

The capabilities-based assessment concluded that lack of alignment across a range of policy, strategy, and doctrinal actions have made it difficult to develop and implement coherent recommendations regarding capabilities

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<sup>38</sup>DOD Directive 3025.1, Military Support to Civil Authorities, para. 4.4.8.2 (Jan. 15, 1993).

<sup>39</sup>DOD Directive 3025.1, para. 4.4.8.2 (1993).

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for DOD's civil support mission.<sup>40</sup> According to NORTHCOM and U.S. Transportation Command officials, these inconsistencies in policy, strategy, and doctrine and in DOD officials' interpretation of them may limit DOD's ability to pre-position forces and equipment for life-saving missions, such as aeromedical evacuations prior to a hurricane making landfall along the coastal United States. These officials cited the importance of pre-positioning forces, because aeromedical and patient evacuation operations are to be concluded no later than 18 hours before a major hurricane's landfall. They said that it is difficult for DOD to spend money to alert the personnel who are needed to perform these missions. According to U.S. Transportation Command officials, DOD and FEMA have agreed on a prescribed mission assignment that would provide DOD with an estimated \$986,388 in "surge" funding for these operations. However, U.S. Transportation Command officials said that additional funds are still needed to alert personnel and pre-position forces, and thereby ensure that they can perform the life-saving mission successfully.

We also found that DOD has not fully exercised available funding authorities to support its civil support operations. Congress has established a Defense Emergency Response Fund to reimburse DOD for providing disaster or emergency assistance to other federal agencies and to state and local governments in anticipation of reimbursable requests. However, a June 2008 report from the DOD Inspector General found that DOD had not used any funds from this account for domestic disaster or emergency relief assistance since it was established in November 1989.<sup>41</sup> An official from DOD's Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Americas' Security Affairs acknowledged that the Defense Emergency Response Fund could be a source of funding but did not know why the fund has not been used for civil support operations.

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<sup>40</sup>The capabilities-based assessment also noted that DOD is in the process of implementing Section 1815 of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2008 (Pub. L. No. 110-181, §1815 (2008)), which requires DOD to work with DHS to determine the military-unique capabilities DOD needs to provide for civil support operations and to prepare a plan to provide funds and resources to maintain existing military-unique civil support capabilities or any additional capabilities required for homeland defense and civil support missions. According to the capabilities-based assessment, these efforts will ultimately inform the fiscal year 2012 programming and budget cycles with military-unique or other civil support capabilities required for DOD to respond to catastrophic or other incidents of national significance.

<sup>41</sup>DOD, Office of the Inspector General, *Defense Emergency Response Fund*. Report Number D-2008-105, (Arlington, VA: June 20, 2008).

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## DOD Has Personnel to Coordinate DOD Capabilities for Civil Support, but Roles, Responsibilities, and Command Relationships Are Not Clearly Defined, and DOD Has Not Assessed Its Staff Needs

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### Defense Coordinating Officers and Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers Constitute Important DOD Capabilities for Civil Support

DOD guidance and the *National Response Framework* state that the Defense Coordinating Officer, when requested by civil authorities and approved by DOD, serves as the single point of contact for DOD at the FEMA regions, and is responsible for coordinating with federal and state authorities on the use of military capabilities for defense support of civil authorities. DOD Directive 3025.1 (1993), and the implementing guidance for this directive, 3025.1-M, “Manual for Civil Emergencies” (1994), define the roles and responsibilities of the Defense Coordinating Officers. According to this guidance, Defense Coordinating Officer responsibilities require knowledge of military capabilities and of how to access military assets to support validated requirements.

As of 2006, DOD permanently assigned 10 full-time Defense Coordinating Officers, along with a full-time supporting staff known as the Defense Coordinating Element, to each FEMA region,<sup>42</sup> and colocated all of them with the FEMA regional headquarters. FEMA officials we interviewed said that these actions have greatly improved coordination among DOD, FEMA, and other civil authorities; previously, they said, their understanding of DOD capabilities was limited because they had only infrequent contact

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<sup>42</sup>Prior to this time, the Defense Coordinating Officers provided disaster assistance to civil authorities on a part-time basis because they also served as Army training brigade commanders. In this role, they were primarily responsible for training Army reserve component personnel for warfighting missions.

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with the Defense Coordinating Officers. These FEMA officials said that the Defense Coordinating Officers and Defense Coordinating Elements, especially the Defense Coordinating Element's planners, have improved civilian authorities' awareness of DOD's capabilities by providing disaster planning expertise to civil authorities and by routinely participating in disaster exercises, planning conferences, and workshops throughout the FEMA regions. For example, they said, Defense Coordinating Officers have especially improved FEMA's awareness of DOD's logistical capabilities by informing FEMA about DOD installations and bases, located throughout the FEMA regions, that could be used as staging areas to pre-position commodities and supplies. Defense Coordinating Officers and Defense Coordinating Elements told us that having a full-time presence in the FEMA regions has allowed them to build effective relationships and establish trust with civil authorities. According to NORTHCOM officials, the Defense Coordinating Officers are a key means of gaining insight into civil authorities' capabilities, thus assisting NORTHCOM in better anticipating civil support requirements.

The military services' Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers assist the Defense Coordinating Officers in executing their civil support responsibilities. DOD Directive 3025.16, "Military Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officer (EPLO) Program" (2000), establishes DOD policy for the management of the Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officer program and creates additional points of contact within the military services for federal and state coordination of resources for emergency response. This policy directive states that the military services are responsible for ensuring that Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers are trained and equipped to meet the requirements of DOD's civil support mission. Additionally, DOD's 3025.1-M, "Manual for Civil Emergencies," establishes doctrinal procedures necessary for implementation of the Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officer program to provide civil support under DOD Directive 3025.1. It provides for the establishment of Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officer teams at the FEMA regions and states, and it defines the roles and responsibilities of the Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers. Defense Coordinating Officers told us that the Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers play a critical role in assisting them in day-to-day operations; in exercises that are designed to simulate a real-life disaster; and in disasters. For example, the Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers routinely provide situational awareness at both the state and FEMA regional levels by participating in meetings, planning workshops, and conferences; by establishing relationships with federal and state disaster-management officials, including the National Guard; and by reviewing state and federal agency disaster plans. Several of



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the Defense Coordinating Officers told us that the Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers are their key source of information on state capabilities. During exercises and actual disasters, the Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers will deploy to the State Joint Force Headquarters,<sup>43</sup> state emergency operation centers, Joint Field Offices,<sup>44</sup> or FEMA's Regional Response Coordination Centers and assist the Defense Coordinating Officer in validating requests-for-assistance. They provide the Defense Coordinating Officer with expertise on the capabilities that are available from their respective military services, and they serve as liaisons between the Defense Coordinating Officer and their military services, the federal agencies responsible for the Emergency Support Function activities,<sup>45</sup> state emergency management officials, and National Guard officials. Almost all of the Defense Coordinating Officers indicated to us that the Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers were important to a great or moderate extent for gaining knowledge of gaps in state disaster capabilities.

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**DOD Has Not Clearly Defined Roles, Responsibilities, or Command and Control Relationships for DOD's Civil Support Coordination Personnel**

DOD has not updated or clearly defined the roles and responsibilities of the Defense Coordinating Officers and Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers that it has assigned to the FEMA regions, due to gaps in policy and guidance for its civil support mission. As we have previously stated, DOD has not updated its key policies and guidance for the civil support mission, namely DOD Directive 3025.1 (1993), or the implementing guidance for this directive, 3025.1-M, "Manual for Civil Emergencies." This guidance continues to define the roles and responsibilities of the Defense Coordinating Officers and Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers, even though significant changes have occurred in DOD's command responsibilities and organizational structure for executing its civil support

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<sup>43</sup>State Joint Force Headquarters provides command and control of all National Guard forces in a state or territory for the governor.

<sup>44</sup>Joint Field Offices are temporary federal multi-agency coordination centers established locally to facilitate field-level domestic incident management activities.

<sup>45</sup>The Emergency Support Function structure of the *National Response Framework* provides the mechanism for coordinating federal interagency support for a federal response to an incident, and groups functions most frequently used to provide federal support to states and federal-to-federal support during a disaster. The *National Response Framework* includes 15 Emergency Support Functions ranging from transportation to external affairs issues, with federal agencies designated as a coordinator, primary agency, or supporting agency (e.g., Department of Transportation is the coordinator and primary agency for Emergency Support Function #1 Transportation).

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mission. Most notably, NORTHCOM and PACOM now have the responsibility for executing the civil support mission within their areas of responsibility, something not accounted for in the earlier guidance. Furthermore, DOD Directive 3025.16, DOD's guidance for the Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officer program, has not been updated since 2000—about 2 years prior to the establishment of NORTHCOM.

Since DOD has permanently assigned the Defense Coordinating Officers to the FEMA regions, their roles and responsibilities for the civil support mission have expanded, yet the existing guidance does not reflect their additional responsibilities. For example, DOD guidance defines the roles and responsibilities of the Defense Coordinating Officers only after they have been activated—even though Defense Coordinating Officers perform many activities prior to being activated, in an effort to assist NORTHCOM in anticipating civil support requirements. These activities may include establishing liaison among military, state, and other federal agencies; coordinating with service officials regarding the potential use of military service installations and bases for civil support operations; participating in federal, regional, state, and local disaster exercises, planning workshops, and conferences; and providing disaster planning expertise to civil authorities. In addition, according to a Defense Coordinating Officer we interviewed, the Defense Coordinating Officers will routinely provide assistance to civil authorities prior to being officially activated when it appears that a disaster declaration may be imminent.

## Command and Control Challenges

Further, DOD lacks guidance on how the Defense Coordinating Officers are to work with the Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers for the civil support mission. DOD's Joint Staff Defense Support of Civil Authorities Standing Execute Order identifies the Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers as military service assets that may be activated by the military service Secretaries in response to a disaster. It also states that the Defense Coordinating Officer has tactical control of the Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers requested by NORTHCOM. According to a NORTHCOM official, this operational framework is improvised as needed, and has not been included in any other DOD guidance. The command relationship between Defense Coordinating Officers and Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers is therefore not clearly understood throughout the DOD organizations responsible for planning and executing civil support missions.

These gaps in guidance that we have identified may limit the ability of the Defense Coordinating Officers and Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers to fully and effectively coordinate and provide DOD capabilities to

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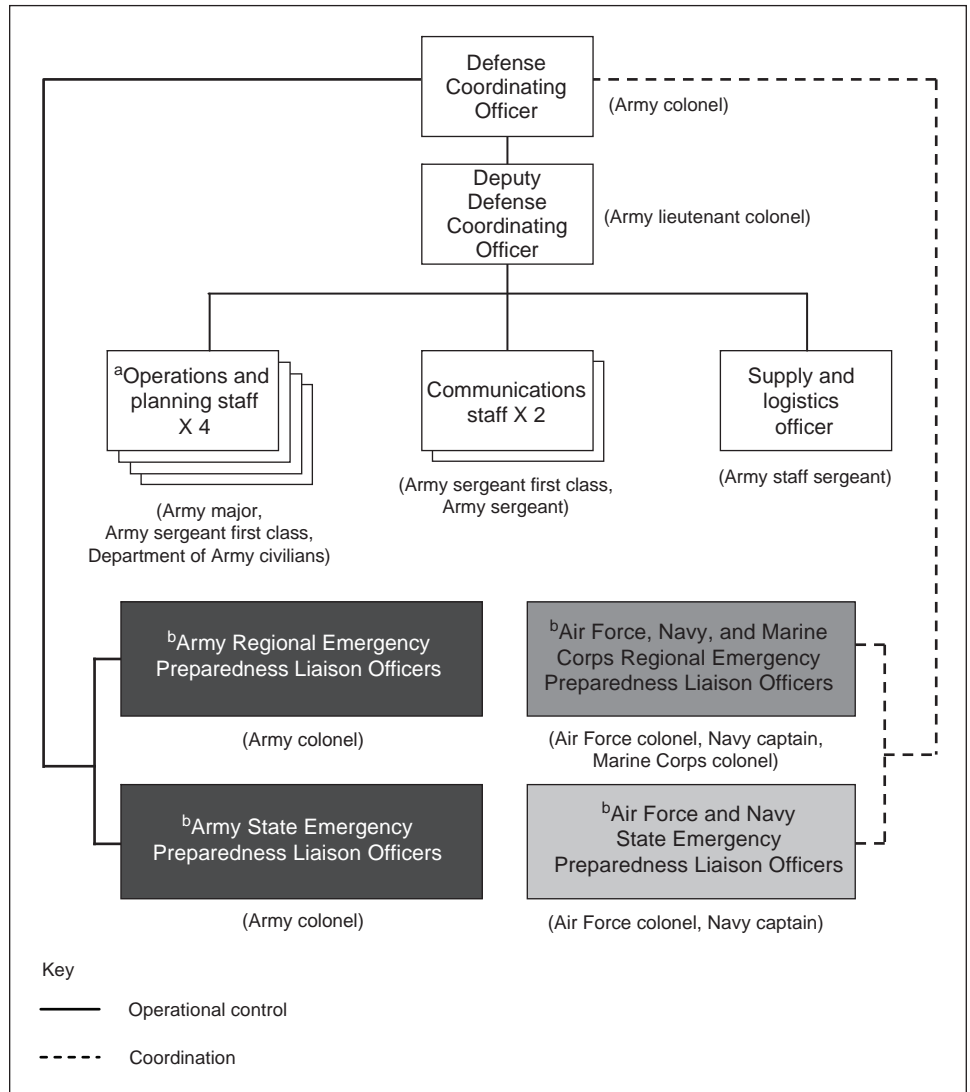
civil authorities. For example, according to several Defense Coordinating Officers we interviewed, service officials, and a DOD Inspector General September 2008 report,<sup>46</sup> in some instances the military services have not been willing to activate their Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers to participate in training and exercises with the Defense Coordinating Officers. Further, some military service officials told us that their Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers are required to meet training and exercise requirements established by their military services, and these requirements can sometimes conflict with the training and exercise requirements identified by the Defense Coordinating Officers. DOD officials also told us that there has been friction and confusion between the military services and the Defense Coordinating Officers regarding the proper employment of the Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers. For example, military service officials told us that Defense Coordinating Officers have attempted to exert command and control over their military service Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers before they were officially activated. Although Defense Coordinating Officers and NORTHCOM officials said that the Defense Coordinating Officer and Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officer relationship has been generally cooperative, they noted that Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers on occasion have not provided assistance when requested by the Defense Coordinating Officers. DOD officials told us that the command and control relationship between the Defense Coordinating Officers—who are nearly all Army personnel<sup>47</sup>—and the Army’s Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers is clearer, resulting in less friction. This is because the Army has delegated operational control over the Army Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers to the Defense Coordinating Officers on a day-to-day basis. However, the other military services have not done so; prior to activation for an event or exercise, the Defense Coordinating Officers have only coordinating relationships with the Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers from the other services. Figure 3 shows an organizational chart of the Defense Coordinating Officer and Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officer team.

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<sup>46</sup>DOD, Office of the Inspector General, *Approval Process, Tracking, and Financial Management of DOD Disaster Relief Efforts*. Report Number D-2008-130, (Arlington, VA: Sept. 17, 2008).

<sup>47</sup>NORTHCOM’s 10 Defense Coordinating Officers and Defense Coordinating Elements are all staffed by Army personnel. However, in PACOM, the Defense Coordinating Officer for the state of Hawaii and the territory of American Samoa is under the Army, and the one for the territories of Guam and the Northern Marianas is under the Navy.

**Figure 3: Defense Coordinating Officer and Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officer Team**



Source: DOD.

<sup>a</sup>In May 2009, Army North allocated additional planning staff to four Defense Coordinating Elements. Regions III and IV each received one military planner, Region II received a military planner for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Region X received two military planners—one for Alaska and one for the National Interagency Fire Center, which is located in its region. In fiscal year 2010, the PACOM Defense Coordinating Officer for Hawaii became permanently assigned and currently has six full-time staff positions in its Defense Coordinating Element. A PACOM official told us that the command plans to increase this number to eight to accommodate the workload and to reflect the staffing changes NORTHCOM made.

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<sup>b</sup>Regional Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers represent their service at the FEMA regional headquarters, where they serve as a liaison with the Defense Coordinating Officer and Element, FEMA regional staff, and other federal regional organizations and agencies. According to NORTHCOM, there are at least two Regional Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers from each service in each of the 10 FEMA regions. State Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers represent their service at the state level, usually at the state National Guard's Joint Force Headquarters, where they serve as a liaison with state organizations and agencies as well as the Defense Coordinating Officer and Element. According to military service officials we interviewed, the Air Force, Army, and Navy generally have at least one State Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officer in each state, while the Marine Corps does not have State Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers.

The command and control and coordination challenges we have described exist because the Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers are under the operational command and control of their respective military services, while the Defense Coordinating Officers remain under the operational command and control of the combatant commands—NORTHCOM and PACOM. A 2008 report by the DOD Inspector General highlighted inefficiencies regarding coordination in DOD disaster training and exercises due, in part, to a lack of Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officer participation, and recommended that NORTHCOM determine whether the DOD 3025 series of directives provides adequate authority to Defense Coordinating Officers to ensure that DOD maintains an adequately trained and exercised Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officer program.<sup>48</sup> In recognition of their critical role in planning, coordinating, and executing DOD's civil support mission, NORTHCOM has attempted to establish standard requirements for the Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers in the following seven general areas: organization and structure; roles and responsibilities; qualification, selection, and administration; equipping and resourcing; training and professional development; operations and command and control; and reporting. However, the military services have opposed this NORTHCOM initiative, on the grounds that their Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers have additional duties to their respective services aside from assisting the Defense Coordinating Officers. NORTHCOM officials maintain their view that, because of the lack of consistency in the military services' training and equipment requirements for their Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers, it cannot be determined whether these personnel are adequately trained and equipped to perform the civil support mission. Without updated and clear guidance on the roles and responsibilities of the Defense Coordinating

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<sup>48</sup>DOD Office of the Inspector General, Report Number D-2008-130. Because the recommendation had been redirected to NORTHCOM from the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Americas' Security Affairs, NORTHCOM had not provided an official comment on this recommendation at the time the DOD Inspector General report was published.

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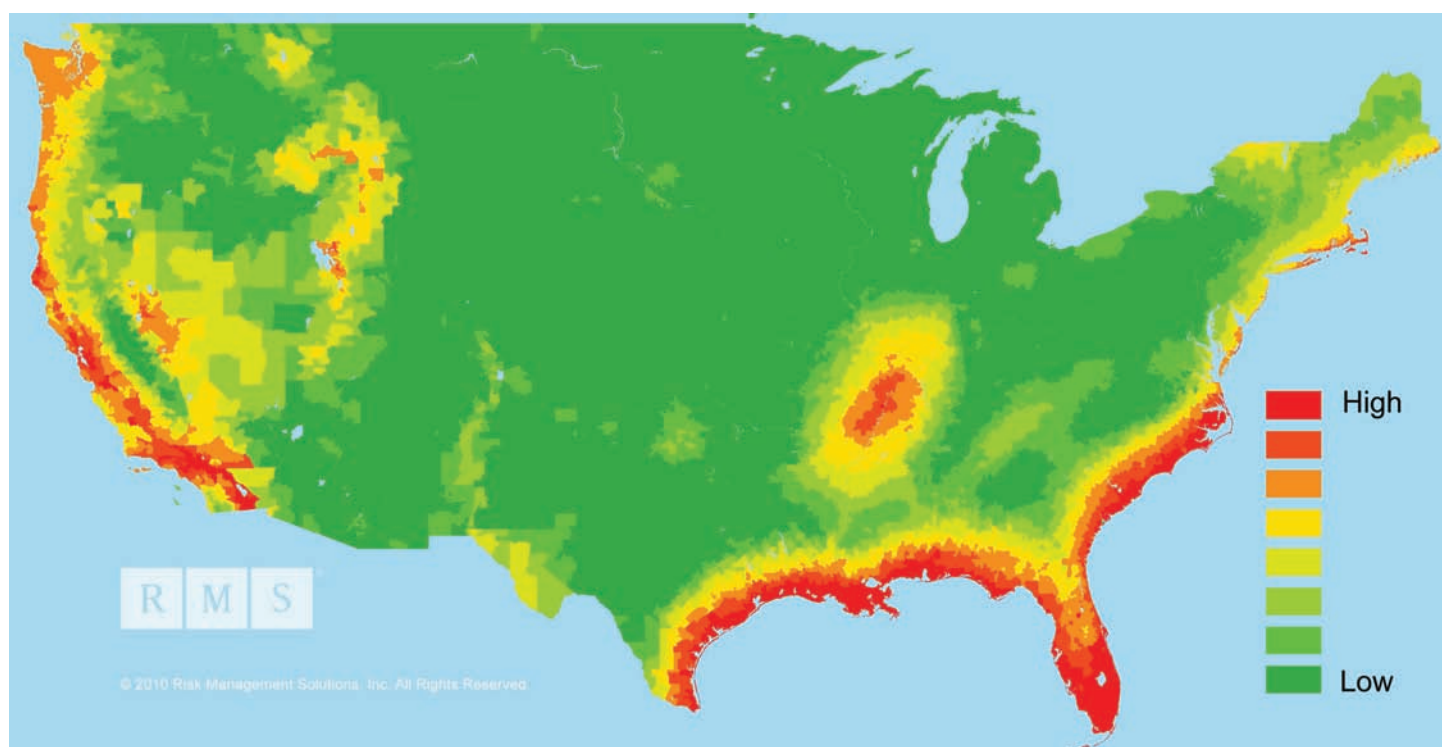
Officers and the Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers, friction and confusion between DOD commands and the services is likely to continue and potentially hamper the effectiveness of DOD's civil support mission planning and preparedness.

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**Staff Composition of the Defense Coordinating Officer Program Is Not Based on a Staffing Needs Assessment**

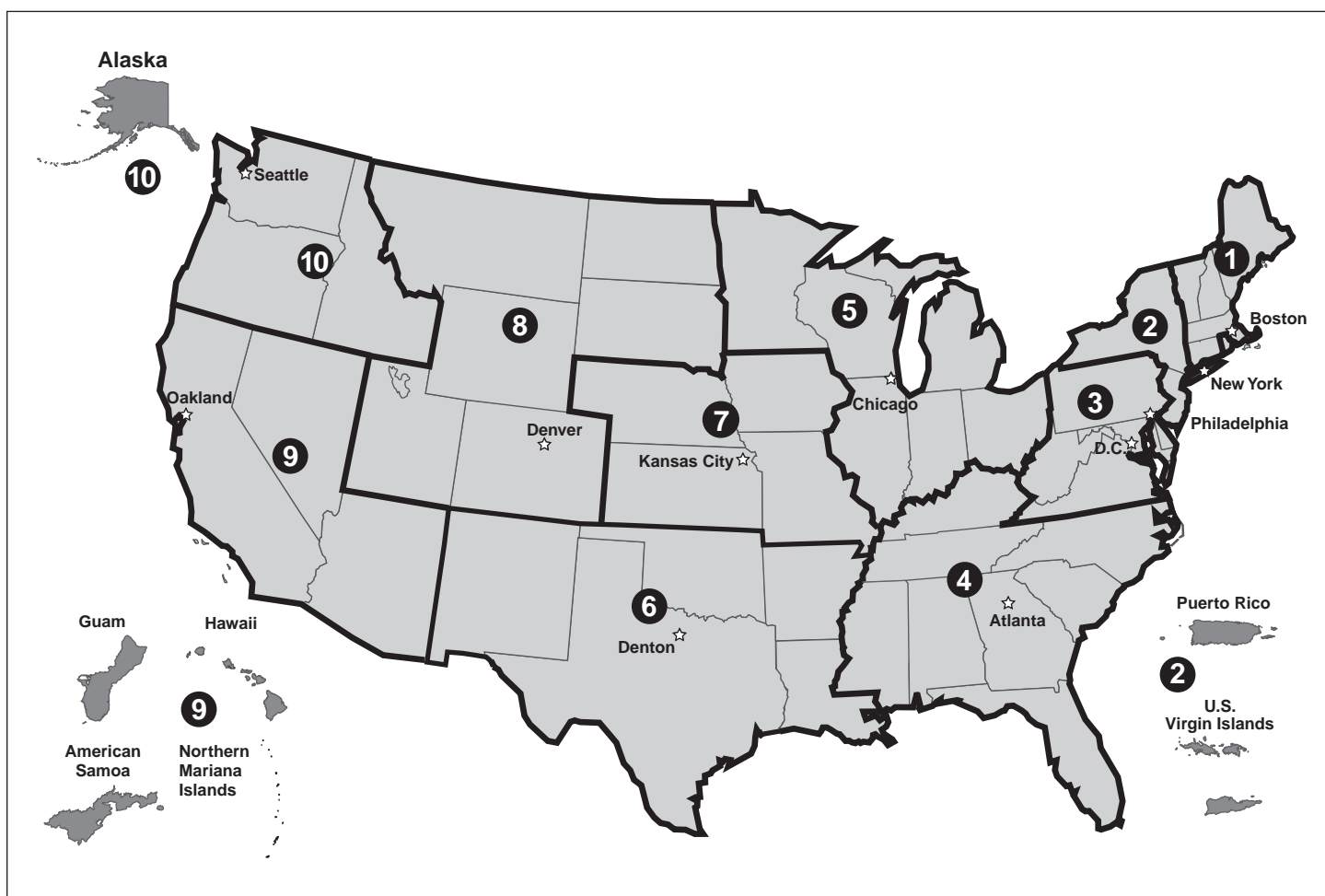
The size and composition of the Defense Coordinating Officer program is not based on a staffing needs assessment and therefore does not necessarily reflect the unique characteristics or disaster needs of the several FEMA regions. Disasters such as hurricanes, wildfires, and flooding occur in some regions more often than others. For instance, in 3 fiscal years of 2007 through 2009 there were only five disaster declarations throughout FEMA Region III, while there were 97 disaster declarations in Region VI. These events in Region VI represented nearly 25 percent of all disaster declarations nationwide for those 3 years. Figures 4 and 5 illustrate the combined relative risk of earthquakes and hurricanes across the United States. As figures 4 and 5 show, different FEMA regions are prone to different disasters, with some regions facing greater risk of catastrophic disasters than others; therefore they may require different levels of personnel and types of expertise from DOD both in preparing for and responding to natural disasters. For example, one of the Defense Coordinating Officers told us that he could use more specialists, particularly in logistics and aviation.

**Figure 4: Catastrophic Risk in the United States: Earthquakes and Hurricanes**



Source: Risk Management Solutions.

Figure 5: FEMA Regions



Sources: FEMA; Map Resources (maps).

Although DOD recognizes that its civil support mission requires a joint effort from all the military services, its Defense Coordinating Officer program continues to be staffed only by Army personnel, except for PACOM's Navy Defense Coordinating Officer in Guam. Several DOD officials told us that the Defense Coordinating Officer program should be more reflective of the multiservice environment in which it operates. However, as we have noted above, there is a lack of DOD guidance that delineates the roles and responsibilities of the Defense Coordinating Officers prior to their activation, including how they are to coordinate with the military services' Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers with emergency preparedness activities. A September 2008 DOD Inspector



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General report found that NORTHCOM has not obtained an equal and adequate level of effort from all the military services to jointly establish the Defense Coordinating Officer program, and recommended that the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff develop an implementation plan to migrate the staffing of Defense Coordinating Officer positions from the Army to all the military services and other DOD components, as appropriate. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff concurred with the recommendation, and the Joint Chiefs plan to implement actions to address the recommendation by fiscal year 2010.<sup>49</sup> A NORTHCOM official acknowledged to us that a jointly staffed Defense Coordinating Officer program would be a good idea, and said that NORTHCOM has discussed the proposal with the military services. The DOD *Homeland Defense and Civil Support Joint Operating Concept* states that civil support operations are inherently joint endeavors, and that changes in DOD concepts, policies, authorities, and organizations may be required to ensure an effective and integrated DOD response.

Although DOD has improved its support of civil authorities through improvements in the Defense Coordinating Officer program, its outdated, inconsistent, and unclear guidance on roles, responsibilities, and command and control relationships; and lack of a staffing needs assessment increase the risk that DOD may not be appropriately staffed to meet the varying needs of the FEMA regions, thus potentially limiting its ability to provide an optimally coordinated response to civil authorities with appropriate multiservice capabilities.

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<sup>49</sup> According to the DOD Inspector General's office as of February 2010, the Joint Staff has coordinated a follow-up inquiry with NORTHCOM, the military services, and the National Guard Bureau. There is general support for the concept of developing an implementation plan to migrate the staffing of Defense Coordinating Officer positions from the Army to all of the services and other DOD components, as appropriate. NORTHCOM will establish a working group to determine whether to pursue the idea of sourcing the Defense Coordinating Officers from the other services, to include developing a migration plan, if applicable.

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## DOD Has Established Processes to Respond to Civil Authorities, but It Has Not Established a Comprehensive System to Track Requests-for-Assistance

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### DOD Has Established Processes to Respond to Civil Authorities

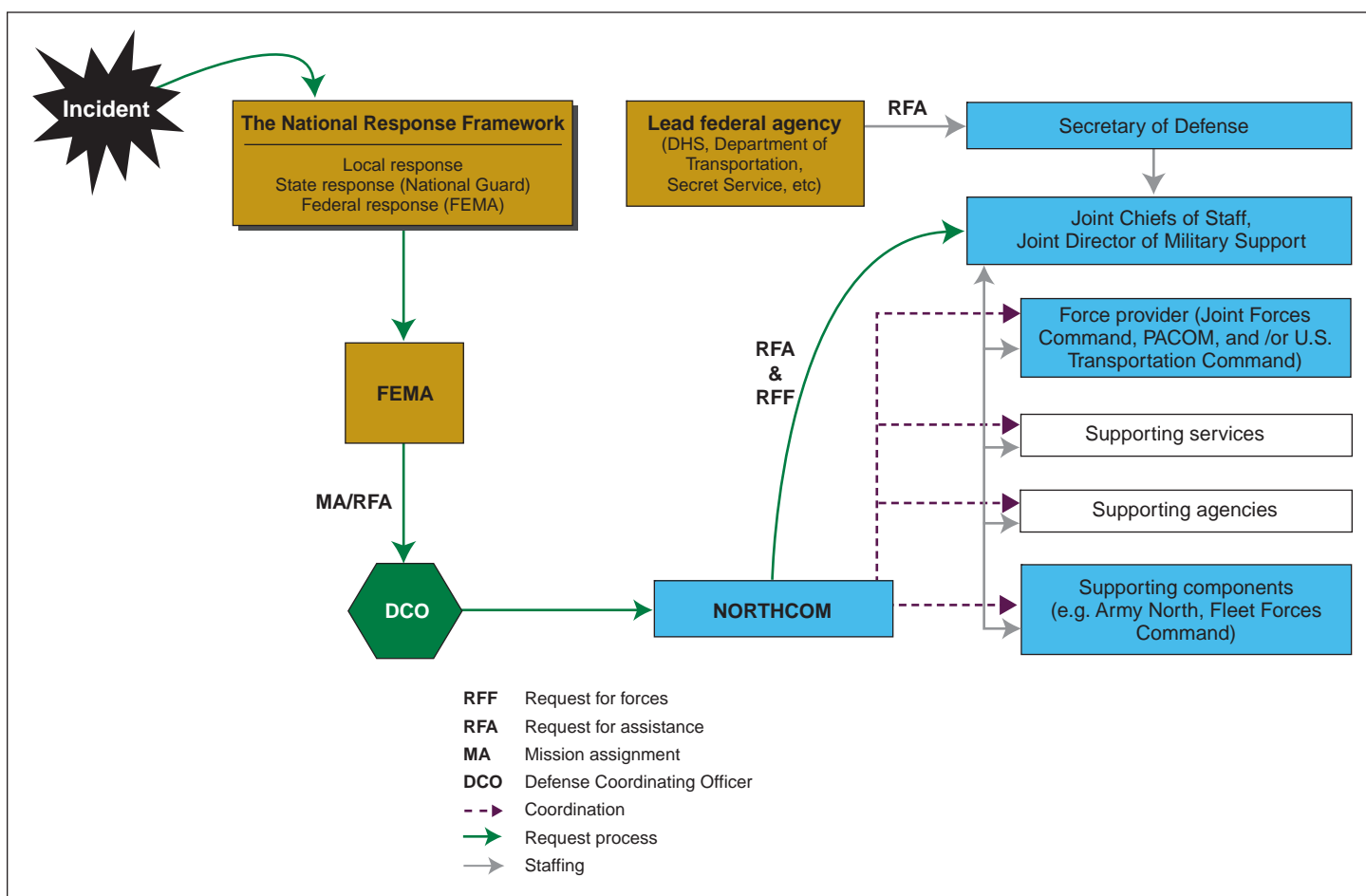
The *National Response Framework* broadly calls for DOD and other federal agencies to respond to requests-for-assistance from state and local civilian authorities, and DOD follows an internal process to respond to these requests-for-assistance when both state and other federal civilian resources have been exhausted or are unavailable. How DOD handles these requests-for-assistance depends on various factors, such as whether the request is a Stafford Act or non-Stafford Act request; how much time has elapsed since the incident occurred; and the identity of the originator of the request. DOD's Joint Publication 3-28, *Civil Support*, lays out the department's internal process for reviewing and sourcing—that is, providing military resources—for requests-for-assistance from other federal agencies.

The process by which the requests-for-assistance are conducted is complex. The primary federal agency—usually FEMA, working in conjunction with the Defense Coordinating Officer and Defense Coordinating Element—will initiate the request-for-assistance. To validate the request, according to Joint Publication 3-28, the Defense Coordinating Officer should ensure that it is readily understandable and clearly describes the requirement or capability that is needed. If the Defense Coordinating Officer finds that the request-for-assistance calls for a specific asset rather than a capability, the response process will be lengthened as the officer and staff coordinate with the requesting agency to revise the request language. Further, the Defense Coordinating Officer/Element must evaluate all requests based on the six criteria established in DOD's Joint Publication 3-28, which are applied at all levels of DOD review. These criteria are as follows:

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- Cost: Who pays, and what is the effect on the DOD budget?
  - Appropriateness: Is the requested mission in the interest of DOD to conduct? Who normally performs this mission, and who may be better suited to fill the request?
  - Readiness: How does the request affect DOD's primary warfighting mission?
  - Risk: Does it place DOD's forces in harm's way?
  - Legality: Is the request in compliance with laws and Presidential directives?
  - Lethality: Is the potential use of force by or against DOD forces expected?

The internal DOD request-for-assistance review and sourcing process is presented below in figure 6. This process takes place after local, state, and federal capabilities are exhausted or otherwise unavailable as shown in the *National Response Framework* in figure 1.

**Figure 6: DOD's Internal Process for Responding to Requests-for-Assistance and FEMA Mission Assignments**



Source: DOD.

After the Defense Coordinating Officer validates the request-for-assistance, it is simultaneously forwarded, along with the Defense Coordinating Officer's recommendation for action, to NORTHCOM's Operations Center. The Joint Directors of Military Support at the Joint Staff is copied on the request so it can initiate parallel coordination and planning efforts. At this point, NORTHCOM then coordinates with the appropriate supporting service commands, force provider, the National Guard Bureau, or any other federal or DOD stakeholder, depending on the nature of the incident and the requested capability. Once NORTHCOM reviews and approves the request, it goes to the Joint Directors for Military Support for approval before being sent up to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland

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Defense and Americas' Security Affairs for policy review. Finally, the request-for-assistance is forwarded to the Secretary of Defense for his approval. Upon approval by the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Directors of Military Support will issue an Execute Order to designate a command structure and to task the appropriate commands, services, and DOD agencies to provide support.

NORTHCOM and DOD have developed two methods to expedite the request-for-assistance review and sourcing process.

- First, NORTHCOM has worked with FEMA and DOD officials to develop prescribed mission assignments, which are descriptions of a set of the capabilities civil authorities might need from DOD. The prescribed mission assignments are developed so as to provide a common understanding of a capability, and they also serve as a template for drafting mission assignments. Most of the Defense Coordinating Officers told us that they use the prescribed mission assignments to a great extent to execute their civil support mission. For example, several of the Defense Coordinating Officers found the prescribed mission assignments useful for outlining cost information or language as they prepared to write mission assignments. However, one Defense Coordinating Officer said their usefulness for expediting requests-for-assistance is limited, because the requests still have to go through the regular process.
- Second, the Joint Chiefs of Staff have developed the Defense Support of Civil Authorities Standing Execute Order, which pre-identifies forces that a supported combatant commander may use based upon historical requests for DOD assistance. Many of the Defense Coordinating Officers said this order is an important piece of guidance, because it identifies the DOD capabilities that are most readily available to assist civil authorities during an event. However, if the requested item is not listed in the Execute Order, the request must be channeled through the standard internal DOD request-for-assistance process, so it will take longer. According to DOD officials, in some emergency cases, DOD allows for the immediate activation of certain assets on vocal orders from the Secretary of Defense, with the regular process to be performed later.

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## Civil Authorities Are Not Fully Aware of DOD's Processes for Responding to Requests-for-Assistance

While DOD has developed a process to respond to requests-for-assistance and has published portions of a description of its internal process as part of an annex to the *National Response Framework*, the lead civilian authorities may not be fully aware of the details or length of this process. For example, service and Defense Coordinating Element officials told us that their biggest challenge is responding to incidents when civil authorities request assistance too late for DOD to respond due to unrealistic expectations about DOD response times. An official at NORTHCOM concurred, saying that the only situations in which NORTHCOM cannot respond are those for which the request comes too late. Further, FEMA's Liaison Officer to NORTHCOM acknowledged that FEMA officials do not recognize how lengthy the DOD review and sourcing process is. According to several service and Defense Coordinating Element officials, civil authorities have the perception that DOD can respond immediately to a request; they do not realize that it takes time to identify, activate, and deploy military units in response to a request-for-assistance. This perception can be especially dangerous when aeromedical evacuation<sup>50</sup> of patients is needed in advance of a hurricane's landfall. These patients have special medical needs, and a crew of specially trained nurses and physicians must be assembled to care for them. A U.S. Transportation Command official told us that requests for aeromedical evacuation assistance must be made early, as it takes at least 72 hours to activate the personnel with the skills needed to execute this mission. Further, this official stated that these crews can safely operate no later than 18 hours before a hurricane makes landfall. DOD's capabilities-based assessment for homeland defense and civil support identified the response timeliness of DOD transportation support—including aeromedical evacuation—as a capability shortfall. The assessment noted that although civil authorities have identified a need for DOD transportation support within 24 hours of a catastrophic incident, DOD has limited capability to respond sooner than 72 hours after the incident. A NORTHCOM official suggested that educating state decision makers (i.e. governors and state emergency management officials) about DOD's response times and processes may help expedite their disaster declaration process so that NORTHCOM can respond before it is too late to do so. Without shared, comprehensive guidance outlining DOD's internal review and sourcing process, state and federal decision makers may overestimate the speed of DOD's response and therefore not request assistance in a

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<sup>50</sup> Aeromedical evacuation involves the movement of patients to and between medical facilities by air transportation.

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timely manner. DOD could help to mitigate this issue by incorporating its internal processes for responding to requests-for-assistance in the partner guide that we recommended in a recent report.<sup>51</sup> Doing so would provide DOD's interagency partners with information on the complexity of its internal review and sourcing process for civilian requests-for-assistance.

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### DOD Lacks a Comprehensive and Formal System That Tracks All Civilian Requests-for-Assistance

While DOD has developed a Web-based system to track incoming requests-for-assistance from civilian authorities, this system is not comprehensive and is not accessible to all of DOD's interagency partners. During Hurricane Katrina, DOD was unable to efficiently manage or track a large number of requests-for-assistance. Following Hurricane Katrina, U.S. Army North developed the DOD Defense Support of Civil Authorities Automated Support System (the tracking system) to monitor the approval, sourcing, cost, and progress of requests-for-assistance from FEMA. NORTHCOM approved the tracking system in March 2007.

According to a 2008 DOD Inspector General Report, the tracking system should enable DOD users to monitor the approval, sourcing, and progress of civilian requests-for-assistance. Some Defense Coordinating Officers, Defense Coordinating Elements, and service officials agree about the need for a tracking system, and others recognize benefits provided by the current system. However, we have identified gaps in the tracking system's ability to maintain a common operational picture and provide real-time situational awareness. Furthermore, the current system is not an official DOD program to track civilian requests-for-assistance. Its use is voluntary; there are no requirements mandating that requests-for-assistance and associated information be entered into the system. DOD officials indicated to us that the system is available to all DOD components and interagency partners who request and are granted access.

While PACOM and NORTHCOM have agreed to use the system and they require their components to use it, the DOD force providers—Joint Forces Command and its components (such as Air Combat Command and Marine

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<sup>51</sup>In [GAO-10-364](#), we state that “to facilitate and institutionalize a unified approach between DOD and its federal partners for interagency coordination for homeland defense and civil support missions, we recommend that the Secretary of Defense direct the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, in coordination with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to establish a time line to develop and issue a partner guide that identifies the roles and responsibilities of DOD entities, processes, and agreed-upon approaches for interagency coordination for homeland defense and civil support efforts.”

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Forces Command)—are not utilizing the sourcing section of the system. Instead, Joint Forces Command and its components use classified systems, like Global Force Management and the Joint Capability Requirements Manager, to resource their civil support requirements. Those systems are not compatible with the unclassified tracking system. When asked about the DOD Defense Support of Civil Authorities Automated Support System, officials at Air Combat Command told us that they were unaware of its existence. Additionally, service and Defense Coordinating Element officials noted that information is not always entered into the system accurately, thus limiting the system's utility. Further, a Defense Coordinating Officer told us that the architects of the current system did not ask civil support stakeholders what they thought should be included in a request-for-assistance tracking system.

During the course of our audit work, we found that other DOD information technology systems have the potential to enhance situational awareness and provide a common operating picture for both DOD and the civilian authorities it is assisting. For example, Air Force North has developed the unclassified Defense Support for Civil Authorities Collaboration Suite for its Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers. While this Air Force system can perform all of the same functions as the current unclassified tracking system, it ties in additional features to provide a single information collaboration system, such as a section noting available capabilities at each Base Support Installation; all state emergency management points of contact; anticipated requests-for-assistance based upon lessons learned and historical requests; a Google Earth section that maps weather and the locations of Air Force bases; and a section showing “shared situational awareness,” including threat assessments and continuous updates of current operations. Similarly, PACOM's Joint Task Force-Homeland Defense has leveraged the All Hazards Decision Support System, an unclassified system developed by the Pacific Disaster Center. This system uses geospatial mapping and modeling capabilities to identify locations and critical areas of vulnerability for potential disasters. In addition, the Pacific Disaster Center's system provides a common operating picture by allowing interoperability among agencies, and it is accessible to all stakeholders in the disaster-management community.

Further, despite recommendations in the April 2009 *DOD Information Sharing Implementation Plan* regarding the establishment of authentication and access standards across unclassified systems to allow DOD and its external mission partners to achieve an appropriate level of access to information concerning civil support operations, the DOD Defense Support of Civil Authorities Automated Support System does not



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provide a common operating picture for DOD and the lead civilian agencies. That is because the system is an internal NORTHCOM system and not a DOD-wide program, and attempts to link the system with those in other agencies, such as FEMA, have been unsuccessful in terms of interoperability. Therefore, FEMA and the other lead federal agencies, such as the U.S. Secret Service, do not necessarily have visibility into the system. According to FEMA officials, that lack of visibility constitutes a major shortfall in FEMA's ability to see the status of its requests.

Finally, although there should be situational awareness among DOD and its interagency partners, DOD has acknowledged in its homeland defense and civil support capabilities-based assessment that such situational awareness is lacking. DOD's Defense Support of Civil Authorities Automated Support System is not comprehensive; it includes only those requests-for-assistance issued to DOD by FEMA and the National Interagency Fire Center.<sup>52</sup> The system does not include all requests issued by the other federal agencies that have lead roles in specific cases. For example, the DOD Defense Support of Civil Authorities Automated Support System did not include requests-for-assistance from the U.S. Secret Service—the lead agency for pre-planned National Special Security Events<sup>53</sup>—for the annual United Nations General Assembly, the 2008 Presidential Nominating Conventions, or the 2009 G-20 Summit. In September 2009, DOD was tasked to provide air support, bomb detection, search and rescue, and medical assistance to support the Secret Service for the G-20 Summit held in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. However, the current tracking system contained no record of this request.

Without a comprehensive, unclassified system that tracks requests-for-assistance from, and is shared with, all of DOD's interagency partners, gaps will remain in gaining real-time situational awareness and in maintaining a common operational picture of DOD's assistance for all participants involved in disaster-response missions.

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<sup>52</sup> As we were drafting our report in December 2009, three requests-for-assistance from the Department of Transportation for the August 2007 Minnesota bridge collapse were added to the DOD Defense Support of Civil Authorities Automated Support System. Since they were added to the system over 2 years after the event, we are not including the Department of Transportation as a federal agency with information in the system.

<sup>53</sup> National Special Security Events are events of national significance, by virtue of their profile or status, that represent a significant target and, therefore, warrant additional preparation, planning, and mitigation efforts.

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## Conclusions

DOD, through both NORTHCOM and PACOM, has taken concrete steps to develop and enhance its defense support of civil authorities mission in such ways as conducting an assessment of the DOD capabilities needed to assist civil authorities and designating full-time personnel to coordinate with federal, state, territorial, tribal, and local civil authorities. These efforts improve DOD's overall ability to assist federal, state, and local authorities in the shared responsibility of responding to natural disasters in the United States. But this improvement has been limited by outdated and inconsistent DOD policies, guidance, and doctrine pertaining to the civil support mission. Unless and until these issues are addressed, challenges will remain in the ability of DOD commands and personnel, specifically the Defense Coordinating Officers and their staffs, to provide the support requested by civil authorities during disasters. Without clear roles, responsibilities, effective command and control structures, shared guidance, and an assessment of DOD staffing needs in the FEMA regions, DOD will be missing an opportunity to further enhance its ability to support civil authorities with the kind of coordinated and integrated civilian and military response to disasters that is intended by the *National Response Framework*. While DOD can address policy and guidance issues, there are obstacles over which it has no control, such as a statutory restriction on DOD's authority to order Reserve personnel to involuntary active duty service for catastrophic disaster relief, which we raised as matter for congressional consideration in 1993 and again in 2006.<sup>54</sup> We continue to believe that this statutory restriction impedes DOD's ability to respond to and assist civilians during catastrophic natural disasters. To some degree, DOD will always face challenges and risks in this mission area because it has to be prepared for a wide variety of incidents that can range from a regional flood to a catastrophic tsunami or hurricane, while maintaining focus on its warfighting mission. However, DOD can make further improvements to mitigate these challenges and facilitate and strengthen its relationships with federal, state, territorial, tribal, and local civil authorities.

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## Recommendations for Executive Action

To improve DOD's ability to conduct its civil support missions, we recommend that the Secretary of Defense take the following five actions:

- Direct the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Americas' Security Affairs to update DOD policy and guidance for civil

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<sup>54</sup> [GAO/RCED-93-186](#) and [GAO-06-643](#).

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support (i.e., DOD directive and instruction 3025 series) to reflect current doctrine, terminology, funding policy, practices, and DOD's organizational framework for providing civil support, to include clarifying NORTHCOM and PACOM roles and responsibilities for civil support missions; and establish time frames for completion.

- Direct the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Americas' Security Affairs, in coordination with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to:
  - clarify roles and responsibilities, including command and control relationships for the Defense Coordinating Officers, Defense Coordinating Elements, and Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers;
  - identify the extent to which NORTHCOM and PACOM should set training and equipping requirements for the Defense Coordinating Officers, Defense Coordinating Elements, and Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers; and
  - conduct a review of staffing requirements for the Defense Coordinating Officers, Defense Coordinating Elements, and Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers in both the NORTHCOM and PACOM areas of responsibility that includes but is not limited to an assessment of staff size, subject-matter expertise, and military service composition by FEMA region.
- Direct the Joint Staff in coordination with the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Networks and Information Integration / Chief Information Officer to identify and establish an official, DOD-wide, unclassified tracking system for all incoming requests-for-assistance from federal agencies regarding civil support missions. This system should at a minimum include:
  - requirements and guidance to ensure that the system is comprehensive and captures request-for-assistance data that can be used to anticipate civil support requirements;
  - access for FEMA and other lead federal agencies, to provide them with real-time situational awareness; and
  - time frames for the system's development and implementation.

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## Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

In comments on a draft of this report, DOD agreed with our recommendations and discussed some of the steps it is taking and planning to take to address these recommendations. DOD also provided technical comments, which we have incorporated into the report where appropriate. DHS and FEMA did not provide comments on this report.

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In response to our recommendation that DOD clarify roles and responsibilities, including command and control relationships, and identify the extent to which NORTHCOM and PACOM should set training and equipping requirements for the Defense Coordinating Officers, Defense Coordinating Elements, and Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers, DOD said that new guidance is in coordination to describe roles and responsibilities for DOD entities for homeland defense and civil support. Further, DOD said that NORTHCOM is reviewing the staffing, training, and equipment requirements for the Defense Coordinating Elements in each FEMA region. However, it was unclear from DOD's comments whether and how the Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers' roles, responsibilities, training and equipment requirements will be addressed in the new issuance or in the NORTHCOM review. We continue to believe the inclusion of the Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers in these efforts is important to enhance DOD's ability to support civil authorities with the kind of coordinated and integrated civilian and military response to disasters that is intended by the *National Response Framework*.

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As arranged with your offices, unless you publicly announce its contents earlier, we plan no further distribution of this report until 30 days after its date. At that time, we will send copies to the appropriate congressional committees, the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of Homeland Security, and other interested parties. In addition, the report will be available at no charge on GAO's Web site at <http://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-5431 or [dagostinod@gao.gov](mailto:dagostinod@gao.gov). Contacts points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. Key contributors to this report are listed in appendix III.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Davi M. D'Agostino". The signature is stylized with large, flowing loops and a cursive script.

Davi M. D'Agostino  
Director, Defense Capabilities and Management

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*List of Requesters*

The Honorable Joseph I. Lieberman  
Chairman

The Honorable Susan M. Collins  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs  
United States Senate

The Honorable Bennie G. Thompson  
Chairman  
Committee on Homeland Security  
House of Representatives

The Honorable Loretta Sanchez  
Chairwoman  
The Honorable Jeff Miller  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities  
Committee on Armed Services  
House of Representatives

The Honorable Christopher S. Bond  
United States Senate

The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy  
United States Senate

The Honorable Adam Smith  
House of Representatives

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# Appendix I: Scope and Methodology

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To address the extent to which the Department of Defense (DOD) (1) has identified and addressed its capability gaps for its civil support mission, (2) has clearly defined roles, responsibilities, and relationships and identified appropriate levels and types of personnel to assign to the FEMA regions, and (3) shares and tracks information concerning its civil support requirements response process with civil authorities, we reviewed and analyzed available DOD, U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM), and U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) civil support guidance and 4 of the 20 civil support operational plans, as well as DOD's March 2009 *Homeland Defense and Civil Support Capabilities-Based Assessment*.

To address all of our objectives, we compared the DOD civil support guidance and policies currently in place to the relevant DOD doctrine, which, when compared with anecdotal evidence provided by DOD and civilian officials, allowed us to identify the various policy and guidance issues raised in the report and their associated operational effects. To examine the extent to which DOD has identified and addressed its civil support capability gaps, we reviewed DOD's March 2009 *Homeland Defense and Civil Support Capabilities-Based Assessment* and held discussions with NORTHCOM and other DOD officials about how the assessment was conducted, how NORTHCOM identified relevant capabilities, and how NORTHCOM and DOD plan to use the assessment in the future.

We met with knowledgeable officials across a range of DOD offices and commands, as illustrated in table 2. At these meetings, we held discussions about the work and analysis that DOD has conducted in order to understand what forms of support civilian authorities may ask the department to provide during a catastrophic incident. We also held discussions with these officials about the policies and guidance that exist to provide structure to DOD's civil support mission set. Further, officials in these offices provided us with information on the day-to-day roles and responsibilities that are a part of the civil support mission as they work to prepare to support civil authorities with a wide range of potential disasters.

**Table 2: Defense Installations and Offices Where GAO Obtained Documentary Evidence and Officials' Views Pertaining to the Defense Support of Civil Authorities Mission**

Organization	Installation or office
DOD Headquarters	Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Americas' Security Affairs, Arlington, Virginia
	Office of Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, Arlington, Virginia
	Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Readiness, Arlington, Virginia
	Office of the Director, Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation (CAPE), Arlington, Virginia
	Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Director of Military Support, Arlington, Virginia
	Joint Chiefs of Staff, Strategic Plans and Policy Directorate, Arlington, Virginia
	Joint Chiefs of Staff, Force Structure, Resources, and Assessment Directorate, Arlington, Virginia
	Office of the Inspector General, Arlington, Virginia
U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM)	Headquarters, Petersen Air Force Base, Colorado Springs, Colorado
	U.S. Army North, Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas
	Marine Forces Northern Command, New Orleans, Louisiana
	Air Force North, Tyndall Air Force Base, Panama City, Florida
	Defense Coordinating Officer, FEMA Region III, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
	Defense Coordinating Officer, FEMA Region IV, Atlanta, Georgia
	Defense Coordinating Officer, FEMA Region VII, Kansas City, Missouri
	Defense Coordinating Officer, FEMA Region IX, Oakland, California
U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM)	Headquarters, Camp H.M. Smith, Hawaii
	U.S. Army Pacific, Fort Shafter, Hawaii
	Joint Task Force-Homeland Defense, Fort Shafter, Hawaii
	U.S. Navy Pacific Fleet, Pearl Harbor, Hawaii
	Marine Forces Pacific, Camp H.M. Smith, Hawaii
	Pacific Air Forces, Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii
	Defense Coordinating Officer, Hawaii and American Samoa, Fort Shafter, Hawaii
	Defense Coordinating Officer, Andersen Air Force Base, Guam
U.S. Joint Forces Command	Headquarters, Norfolk Naval Station, Virginia
U.S. Transportation Command	Headquarters, Scott Air Force Base, Illinois
	Air Mobility Command, Scott Air Force Base, Illinois
	Military Sealift Command, U.S. Navy Yard, Washington, District of Columbia
National Guard Bureau	Headquarters, Arlington, Virginia

Organization	Installation or office
U.S. Army	Office of Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, Arlington, Virginia
	Headquarters, Department of the Army, Deputy Chief of Staff G-3/5/7, Arlington, Virginia
	Army Medical Command, Office of the U.S. Army Surgeon General, Falls Church, Virginia
	Army Forces Command, Fort McPherson, Georgia
U.S. Navy	Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Infrastructure, Strategy and Analysis, Arlington, Virginia
	Naval Fleet Forces Command, Norfolk Naval Station, Virginia
U.S. Marine Corps	Headquarters Marine Corps, Homeland Defense Branch, Security Division—Plans, Policies and Operations, Arlington, Virginia
	Marine Forces Command, Norfolk Naval Station, Virginia
U.S. Air Force	Headquarters Air Force Operational Plans and Requirements, Director of Operational Planning, Policy and Strategy, Rosslyn, Virginia
	Air Combat Command, Langley Air Force Base, Virginia

Source: GAO.

We met with FEMA officials at both the national and regional levels to understand how they work with DOD both in identifying capability gaps during planning stages and how they channel state and federal requests-for-assistance to DOD during an actual incident. They discussed with us the evolution of the FEMA-DOD relationship, as well as relationships between DOD officials and state and local civil authorities. Table 3 shows the federal civilian offices and agencies with whom we met.



**Table 3: Federal Civilian Departments and Agencies Where GAO Obtained Documentary Evidence and Officials' Views Pertaining to the Defense Support of Civil Authorities Mission**

Department or agency	Office
Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)	Headquarters, Disaster Operations Directorate, Washington, District of Columbia
	Headquarters, National Preparedness Directorate, Washington, District of Columbia
	FEMA Region III, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
	FEMA Region IV, Atlanta, Georgia
	FEMA Region VII, Kansas City, Missouri
	FEMA Region IX, Oakland, California
	FEMA Liaison Officer to NORTHCOM, Petersen Air Force Base, Colorado Springs, Colorado
	FEMA Pacific Area Office, Fort Shafter, Hawaii
Department of Health and Human Services	Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response, Washington, District of Columbia
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention	Headquarters, Atlanta, Georgia

Source: GAO.

In the course of our audit work we visited four FEMA regions (FEMA regions III, IV, VII, and IX) that were selected because they deal with a range of National Special Security Events such as the Olympics, political conventions, and the Super Bowl, as well as a variety of natural disasters including hurricanes, earthquakes, wildland fires, and floods. During our visits to these FEMA regions we not only met with FEMA officials, but with the Defense Coordinating Officers and their staff in those regions to discuss their role as DOD's representatives to FEMA, other civilian authorities, and other military officials (including the National Guard) in their assigned states and regions. They provided us with anecdotal and documentary evidence on their roles, responsibilities, and relationships in their respective regions. When they were available, we also met with some of the Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers, who are military service representatives. Specifically, we met with an Army Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officer in Region III, one Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officer from the Army, one from the Air Force, and one from the Navy in Region IV, and one Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officer from each of the four services in Region IX.

Subsequent to our meetings with DOD, FEMA, and other federal civilian officials, we reviewed the guidance, policies, and other documentation we obtained from them and compared it with the anecdotal information that those officials shared with us during our meetings in support of all of our

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objectives. We noted discrepancies and areas of concern, then followed up with military and civilian officials as appropriate. Additionally, we reviewed previous GAO and DOD Inspector General reports to identify what, if any, progress and changes had occurred in the area of defense support of civil authorities over the last several years, specifically since Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

Following our visits to Defense Coordinating Officers in four of the FEMA regions, we decided to contact the Defense Coordinating Officers in all 10 FEMA regions to obtain a nationwide perspective of our objectives. In order to obtain detailed information about the extent to which DOD has identified and addressed its capability gaps for its civil support mission; identified and defined roles, responsibilities, and relationships of personnel assigned to the FEMA regions; and shares and tracks information concerning its civil support requirements response process with civil authorities, we developed a structured questionnaire and sent it to all 12 Defense Coordinating Officers assigned to the PACOM and NORTHCOM areas of responsibility. The questionnaire included a variety of questions, covering issues ranging from the guidance the Defense Coordinating Officers use to execute their civil support mission to the methods and mediums (such as regional exercises or planning conferences) they use to identify capability gaps in their region. The questionnaire also asked what challenges, if any, the Defense Coordinating Officers face when anticipating and responding to requests-for-assistance and in identifying capability gaps at both the federal and state levels.

Since we intended to survey the universe of Defense Coordinating Officers at PACOM and NORTHCOM, our survey was not a sample survey and therefore had no sampling errors. However, the practical difficulties of conducting any survey may introduce other types of errors, commonly referred to as nonsampling errors. For example, difficulties in interpreting a particular question, sources of information available to respondents, or entering data into a database or analyzing them can introduce unwanted variability into the survey results. We took steps in developing the questionnaire, collecting the data, and analyzing them to minimize such nonsampling errors. For example, a social science survey methodologist helped design the questionnaire in collaboration with GAO staff that had subject-matter expertise. The questionnaire was also reviewed by an independent GAO survey specialist. The survey asked a combination of questions that allowed for open-ended and close-ended responses. We pretested the content and format of the questionnaire with two Defense Coordinating Officers to ensure that the questions were relevant, clearly stated, and easy to understand. During the pretests, we asked questions to

determine whether (1) the survey questions were clear, (2) the terms we used were precise, (3) the questionnaire did not place an undue burden on the respondents, and (4) the questions were unbiased. We received input on the survey and made changes to the content and format of the final questionnaire based on our pretest results. Since there were relatively few changes based on the pretests and we were conducting surveys with the universe of respondents—all PACOM and NORTHCOM Defense Coordinating Officers—we did not find it necessary to conduct additional pretests.

Data analysis was conducted by a GAO data analyst working directly with GAO staff with subject-matter expertise. A second independent analyst checked all of the computer programs for accuracy.

Following this extensive work on developing a questionnaire to collect data in a standardized and structured manner, we sent the questionnaire by e-mail on October 8, 2009, in an attached Microsoft Word form that respondents could return electronically after marking checkboxes or entering narrative responses into open-answer boxes. Alternatively, respondents could return the survey by mail after printing the form and completing it by hand. Both PACOM Defense Coordinating Officers returned the completed surveys to GAO electronically. However, NORTHCOM Defense Coordinating Officers were told by their command leadership not to send the completed surveys to GAO, but instead route them through the NORTHCOM headquarters Inspector General. Since this position posed both considerable methodological problems for the integrity of the data we wanted to analyze and would not allow for anonymity and transparency in responses, we instead elected to conduct structured interviews with all 10 NORTHCOM Defense Coordinating Officers individually over the phone using the same questionnaire to promote candid discussions that may not have been obtained through a NORTHCOM screening process.

We combined the information gathered from the telephonic interviews and analyzed the frequency and distribution of marked checkbox responses. We also analyzed the open-ended narrative responses for trends and recurring themes. For instance, although we did not directly ask about the extent to which personnel coordinating DOD's civil support mission are joint, several Defense Coordinating Officers said that the Defense Coordinating Officer and Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officer programs were not joint and that this made their work more challenging than it needed to be. When the Defense Coordinating Officers were not in agreement or had different perspectives on issues, we summarized

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conflicting responses to illustrate the complexity of the Defense Coordinating Officers' mission and the unique challenges found in each region. For example, some Defense Coordinating Officers told us they were sufficiently staffed with their current personnel, when others said they badly need more staff to assist them with their mission and to engage with the states within their regions. We compiled this information and used it in conjunction with the interviews from the four FEMA region visits, our meetings with DOD and FEMA officials, and our review of documents and guidance to identify areas for improvement in DOD's ability to provide support to civil authorities and respond to requests-for-assistance.

We conducted this performance audit from January 2009 to March 2010 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

# Appendix II: Comments from the Department of Defense



HOMELAND DEFENSE  
& AMERICAS' SECURITY AFFAIRS

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
2600 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-2600

MAR 10 2010

Ms. Davi M. D'Agostino  
Director, Defense Capabilities and Management  
U.S. Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Ms. D'Agostino:

This is the Department of Defense (DoD) response to the GAO draft report, GAO 10-386, "HOMELAND DEFENSE: DoD Can Enhance Efforts to Identify Capabilities to Support Civil Authorities During Disasters" dated February 3, 2010 (Job Code 351317). DoD concurs with all three recommendations. Responses to the recommendations are enclosed.

Our point of contact for this action is Mr. Andrew Kuepper, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Americas' Security Affairs (OASD (HD&ASA)), (703) 614-8618 or [andrew.kuepper@osd.mil](mailto:andrew.kuepper@osd.mil).

Sincerely,

Christine E. Wormuth  
Principal Deputy

Enclosure:  
As stated



GAO DRAFT REPORT – DATED FEBRUARY 3, 2010  
GAO CODE 351317/GAO-10-386

"HOMELAND DEFENSE: DoD Can Enhance Efforts to Identify Capabilities to  
Support Civil Authorities During Disasters"

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE COMMENTS  
TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS

**RECOMMENDATION 1:** The GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense direct the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Americas' Security Affairs (ASD(HD&ASA)) to update DoD policy and guidance for civil support (i.e., DoD directive and instruction 3025 series) to reflect current doctrine, terminology, funding, policy, practices, and DoD's organizational framework for providing civil support, to include clarifying U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) and U.S. Pacific Command (USPACOM) roles and responsibilities for civil support missions; and establish timeframes for completion.

**DoD RESPONSE:** Concur. Several draft issuances are in coordination; DoD Directive 3025.dd, Defense Support of Civil Authorities with estimated completion date (ECD) June 2010; DoD Instruction (DoDI) 3025.ff, Defense Support of Civilian Law Enforcement Agencies, ECD August 2010; DoDI 3025.gg, Defense Support of Special Events, ECD September 2010. Corresponding Joint Publications will be updated by September 2011.

**RECOMMENDATION 2:** The GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense direct the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Americas' Security Affairs (ASD(HD&ASA)) in coordination with the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, to:

- Clarify roles and responsibilities, including command and control relationships for the Defense Coordinating Officers, Defense Coordinating Elements, and Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers;
- Identify the extent to which U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) and U.S. Pacific Command (USPACOM) should set training and equipping requirements for the Defense Coordinating Officers, Defense Coordinating Elements, and Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers; and
- Conduct a review of staffing requirements for the Defense Coordinating Officers, Defense Coordinating Elements, and Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers in both the USNORTHCOM and USPACOM areas of responsibility that includes, but is not limited to, an assessment of staff size, subject matter expertise, and military service composition by Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) region.

**DoD RESPONSE:** Concur. A new issuance is in coordination to describe Office of the Secretary of Defense, Joint Staff, combatant command, Service, and Defense Agency roles and responsibilities to include coordination and control for homeland defense and civil support. The Defense Coordinating Officers and Elements are combatant command representatives in the FEMA regions. USNORTHCOM is reviewing the staffing, training, and equipment requirements for the Defense Coordinating Elements in each FEMA region.

**RECOMMENDATION 3:** The GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense direct the Joint Staff, in coordination with the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Networks and Information Integration / Chief Information Officer (ASD(NII)), to identify and establish an official, DoD-wide, unclassified tracking system for all incoming requests for assistance from Federal agencies regarding civil support missions. This system should at minimum include:

- Requirements and guidance to ensure that the system is comprehensive and captures request-for-assistance data that can be used to anticipate civil support requirements;
- Access for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and other lead Federal agencies, to provide them with real-time situational awareness; and
- Timeframes for the system's development and implementation.

**DoD RESPONSE:** Concur. DoD also needs access to the FEMA mission tracking system in order to maintain visibility of the Mission Assignments FEMA has asked DoD to support. Allowing DoD and FEMA to have access to each other's tracking system will provide the best potential for insuring accurate situational awareness on mission assignments between DoD and the Primary Agency in accordance with the National Response Framework.

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# Appendix III: GAO Contacts and Staff Acknowledgments

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## GAO Contacts

Davi M. D'Agostino, (202) 512-5431 or dagostinod@gao.gov

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## Acknowledgments

In addition to the contact named above, William O. Jenkins, Jr., Director, Homeland Security and Justice; Lorelei St. James, Acting Director; Joseph W. Kirschbaum, Assistant Director; Nicholas Benne; Grace Coleman; Michael Hanson; David Lysy; Lonnie J. McAllister; Eric E. Petersen; Terry Richardson; Bethann E. Ritter; Wesley Sholtes; Cheryl Weissman; and Jena Whitley made key contributions to this report.



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